









# THE LONG HARPOON



*A Collection of  
Whaling Anecdotes*

BY ARTHUR C. WATSON

*With Pen-and-ink Sketches  
by the Writer*



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## AN INTRODUCTION

TO the Yankee whaleman, the "long harpoon" was the prince of weapons. Say what you would about the deadly lance and the skill that went into its manipulation, still would the whaleman insist upon the harpoon's supremacy. None but an officer knew the tricks of lancing, it is true; none but an officer could find the "life" of the whale, deep down in his mysterious interior; none but an officer was entitled to give that *coup de grace* and to stand proudly in the bow, ready to risk the first buffetings of the death flurry, ready to be sprayed first by the blood spoutings. Yet the chase was all but over when the lancing time came; perhaps hours had passed of line-slacking and line-hauling, of flashing flukes and gaping jaws, of swift Nantucket sleigh-rides and of foam flying with the ferocity of a snow-blizzard. And where would the officer have found his chance to stand so heroically in the bow, how could be ever have displayed the science of lancing—how could he ever have given the checkmate, in fact, if his knightly harpooner, leaping to the "clumsy cleat" at the very opening of the chase, had not been, in the words of the old whaling classic, "hell with the long harpoon"?

Everything depended upon that opening moment. The boat had crept softly up to its unwitting, peaceful quarry. Nearer and nearer—sidling up to the animal to keep out of his limited vision—close to those dangerous flukes—a matter of a few feet only—"wood to black skin!" That was a moment when nerve and skill were taxed to their utmost, for it was the zero hour. The men had yet to be intoxicated and emboldened by the panic and noise of the fray. The harpoon whizzed. What if it had missed? Well, a boat's crew would have been spared a little taste of pandemonium, but the taverns might not have welcomed them upon their home-coming, and, besides, one of New Bedford's palatial mansions might never have been built.

In the late war, everything—the draft, the training camps, the convoy system, the highly-developed S. O. S., the building of

trenches, the artillery fire—everything was but mere preparation for a solemn moment, the moment of the bayonet attack. And so, in the industry of whaling, the laying of the keel, the craft of the rigger, the shipsmith, the cooper, the boat-builder and the sail-maker, the enterprise of the man of means and the sea-infatuation of the country lad—all were to be concentrated into the throwing of the "long harpoon."

And now that I have made this attempt to explain the significance of the "long harpoon," I might state that I chose this title simply because I could think of nothing else. The book contains scraps of whaling history and descriptive bits of whaling life, most of the material being derived from log-books in the collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Many of the articles have appeared before. To Yachting I am indebted for the permission to reprint five of them; to the Boston Globe, four.

A. C. W.

## THE CHASE — “MASAFUERA JACK”

*Being an account of a brave whale-hunt that inspired  
a high-brow greenhand.*





WHALE hunting has been called the "prince of sports," a sport fit for the great ones of the earth. And, considering the size of the quarry and the perils to be encountered, there is truth in the designation. No matter how rabid or how eager for thrills a sportsman might be, he could find a complete outlet for his zeal in the little 30-foot boat of the Yankee whaleman. He merely would have to row toward the distant spoutings, throw his harpoon, and a brave battle with the mightiest animal in creation would be on.

A whale hunt, an experience fit to arouse the enthusiasm of a sportsman of the first water, was, so to speak, an every-day occurrence to the whaleman during the palmy days of his profession. Not that he was able to grapple with a whale every day, but he spent years of his life roving the seas, suffering many phases of inertia and ennui, all for the sake of engaging in hand-to-hand conflicts with the monsters.

There was a commercial side to these conflicts—a kill meant money to the voyage, more money for each individual's pocket. To

be sure, this commercial side made the whaleman fight a little more earnestly than otherwise, but still the ardor for good sport, present in every human being to some extent, was the prime element in the hunt.

Once a green hand recovered from his first fright and became somewhat used to the dangers he must meet, he became a real lover of the sport — he had to be. And the anticipation, which makes even the trout fisherman patient, together with the battles when they did come, alleviated the rigors and monotony of the long voyages, and made life easier to bear.

The perils of the whale hunt, as the Yankees practiced it, were many. "Beware of the right whale's flukes and the sperm whale's jaw" was an old adage, but the adage does not tell the whole story. The right whale (and for the present purpose all whales except the sperm may be considered in his class) is not a ferocious animal. He does not attack or show fight, and it is only the swishings of his great tail which make him dangerous. On the other hand, the sperm whale often shows an angry, fighting spirit. His flukes can do as much harm as the right whale's, and he has an additional weapon, his jaw, which is large and powerful enough to crush a boat.

These violent motions of the whale, which so frequently damaged boats and took lives, were at their worst when the hunt was closing and when the whale was just ready to expire. The death of the whale was preceded by what was known as a flurry, a sort of mad spasm, particularly dangerous on account of the boat having to be close to the animal to make the kill.

When a whale was first struck with the harpoon, however, he was seldom dangerous, as he was accustomed to "sound" or settle down into the water. The chief danger at that time—and it was not one of the least dangers—came from the rapidity with which the whale line, attached to the harpoon, left the boat. The whale "sounded" with incredible speed; the line whizzed out of the boat, and had to be kept wet to counteract the effect of friction.

Should there be the slightest kink in the line, something was bound to happen. A man stood ready, ax in hand, to cut the line at a minute's notice, but even with this precaution men have been caught in kinks, yanked out of boats and drawn down into the water to a sure death.

Many of the tales of whale-hunting are imaginary; some become exaggerated in the retelling. But we always have a reliable source to find real accounts of these bold battles in the logbooks and journals that have been preserved.

Such accounts were written when the news was hot, when the deeds were still fresh in the memory, when the writers were still stirred by the excitement and still sore and lame from their exertions. As we read the accounts we can easily visualize the scenes in which they were composed.

Perhaps the writer was the mate, seated in his comfortable cabin, refreshed by a good meal after his fight. His brother officers were with him, leaning over his shoulder, making their comments, joyous or depressed, depending on what had been the result of the chase.

Perhaps the writer dwelt in the forecastle, and was wont to compose his story while cramped up in his bunk. One of his shipmates held the ink probably, another worked at the oil lamp trying to lessen the dinginess of the place. Many watched him, no doubt, wondering at the great genius of a man who could manipulate a pen.

What is possibly the finest description of a whale-hunt found in old log-books was written on the Bark Atkins Adams of Fairhaven, which sailed on a sperm whaling voyage in 1858. The writer was Mr. William A. Abbe, a man who may be compared in a great many ways to Richard Henry Dana. Like Dana, he came from a cultured family, and left college to go to sea for his health; like him, his life at sea was spent in the forecastle, doing the work of the humblest on board.

In his spare time Mr. Abbe worked on his journal, entertained his ship-mates with the stories he could tell, and tutored some of them. Later on, after many years had passed, Mr. Abbe returned once again to New Bedford, this time to establish permanent associations with the city. He became the son-in-law of Mr. Jonathan Bourne, Jr., one of the most prominent whaling merchants of New Bedford. He managed Mr. Bourne's two menhaden enterprises, the Pemaquid Oil Co. of Maine and the Montauk Oil Co., located on Long Island.

Mr. Abbe's journal of his whaling days is a masterpiece of its kind. No other journal that has come to our notice shows such graciousness and sympathy toward the men of the forecastle. It

is rich with whaling lore. Printed here is merely one day's entry, comprising an account of a whale-hunt off the Island of Masafuera. The account follows:

"Jan. 26. A little after 6 o'clock, it being my watch below, I was awakened by long, loud cries of 'Thar blows! Thar blows!' coming from aloft. I hastily dressed and with my watch-mates passed on deck. The rigging was filled with men, and from all parts of the ship came those regular cries that denote a sperm whale in sight. I soon learned that two whales were raised about three miles from the ship. We crowded on everything in chase.

"Our breakfast was now sent down. This was soon finished and then we got the boats ready for lowering. The whales were down, and we waited for them to come up before we lowered. In 45 minutes from the time they went down they appeared again about four miles from the ship. The wind was light and the ship was losing in the chase.

"The old man now ordered us to lower, telling the mate, as we shoved off, that he would set the colors when he wanted us to hoist our sails and take our paddles. Off we started, the mate leading. But presently the bow boat pulled ahead of us in the starboard, and continued rapidly on until it was in the lead. We passed the mate and second mate and were close astern of the bow boat. We pulled for two miles. Our boat was now leading the other boats, when we saw the signal set and flying from the ship's mizzen peak.

"All the boats now set their sails and paddled away, heading Northwest. No whales were in sight, but we headed northwest by the boats' compasses in the direction the whales were going when last seen from the ship.

"The bow boat, setting her stuns'l, gradually drew ahead of us, and now the boats were sailing and paddling to leeward, with the wind on our quarter. There was a very heavy swell rolling from the S. W. It was a bright, clear day. The wind lulled when we first set sail, but in two hours' time it freshened a little. On we kept, steadily paddling till the ship was far astern and finally out of sight. For three hours we saw nothing but the swelling sea, a few birds and the white boat-sails as they rose and fell behind the long heaves of the sea. We were all of us tired and wearily urging our boat through the water when about 11 A. M., Johnny

suddenly started from his seat in the head of the boat and cried out, 'Thar blows—close to the bow boat.'

"We saw, as we eagerly watched the bow boat, several spouts apparently close to her, and we worked away hard enough for a chance at the whale. But presently the blows ceased, and we saw the bow boat keep off a little and then luff to with her sail shaking in the wind. We had gained a little on her, but she soon kept off again on her old course. Convinced from these movements that she was close to the whale, we paddled away with renewed ardor.

"In half an hour's time we saw spouts again close to the bow boat. But the wind now began to lull till finally it became a dead calm. The very ripples on the surface of the immense swells sunk away and left the water smooth without a wave. As a great roller would sweep down upon us it would drive before it a body of air that would fill for a moment our flapping sail.

"The boat would lean to the breeze and then roll back with a slatting sail as the long wall of water passed to leeward and left us again becalmed in the trough of the sea.

"We kept on this way for two hours more. The other boats were now some distance astern. We had seen blows every hour just ahead of the bow boat and we kept steadily on in pursuit. Suddenly Mr. Tilson sung out, 'Thar blows—on our lee beam,' and he instantly swept the boat around. As he slacked off the sheet he said, 'There's the whale—Mr. Goland has run by him.' He now told us to take our paddles out and let the boat run before the wind, which had now freshened so that our light craft was running smartly.

"He was afraid of again passing by the whale. The blows which Mr. Tilson saw soon ceased, and the whale sounded.

"We had now an opportunity to bail out our leaky boat and take a lunch of hard bread and water. The mate and second mate, seeing us keep off, followed us, and three boats were soon in a line heading N. N. W., for the whale had milled two points from his N. W. course.

"The mate, under mainsail, gafftopsail and stuns'l, was slowly overhauling us, while Mr. Miller (the second mate) just held his own about a mile astern. For half an hour we kept on. Mr. Goland (third mate) had also kept off and was running down to us. The

mate's boat under the increasing wind rolled on the long swells till she nearly capsized once or twice.

"We soon saw the mate take to his paddles. It afterward appeared that neither the mate nor the second mate had seen anything of the whale since they had left the ship. The mate had long since given up the chase and was now trying to overhaul us to inquire if we had seen any reason to keep on as we did.

"Mistaking this movement, and supposing that the mate had caught sight of the whale, we earnestly looked ahead and almost instantly discovered the whale blowing about a quarter of a mile off our larboard bow and heading across our bows.

"We instantly luffed to avoid going onto the whale's eye. So did the mate. As we eagerly watched our game as he, unconscious of danger, was moving through the water at the rate of four knots, the mate sung out to us to take our paddles.

"We did so and sprung to our work with an ardor to be appreciated only by whalers. We gradually drew astern of the whale and soon were heading directly for him.

"'Spring, my boys, spring! Jerk her up!' sang out our officer in low tones, and every man did his utmost. Unfortunately the wind now died away, and left us dependent upon our paddles, but we still steadily overhauled the whale. As we neared him, we saw that he was of immense size.

"From a great brown reddish mass just above the surface of the sea every moment or two burst out a little cloud of spray that shot up in forks like imprisoned steam, suddenly loosed from confinement. The whale formed a mass of vapory water about 10 feet high, the top spread out so that the drops fell in a circle about the whale's head.

"About what seemed 50 feet from the spout appeared the whale's hump, cutting through the water that foamed about it, curved and hooked like a large blackfish hump, but vastly larger, and visible a foot or two above the sea. The water was all afoam, not from the spout of the whale entirely, but necessarily from so vast a body moving through it with such resistless power.

"Every time the whale spouted he showed a long, immense head, which we could see as we neared him was mottled with large grayish spots, one larger than a barrel some fifteen feet abaft his

nose. All the surface of his body that we could see was humpy with fat and hilly with oily blubber.

"We kept on, excited beyond description by the rich sight. The whale was spouting regularly and low. It was evident that he wasn't gallied. We were close astern of his curious old hump (for it was unlike any other hump that I have seen on a whale), and were about half a ship's length abaft his mottled gray submerged form, when suddenly uprose a splendid pair of flukes, black as night and broad as our quarter-deck. Sweeping high in the air, they curved slowly with an indescribable confidence and grace into the sea, and the whale had gone down.

"Disappointed, we lay to for the other boats to come up. The mate and Mr. Goland soon came alongside, the latter officer reporting that he had been within two ship's lengths of the whale some five times until finally he had run by him.

"We found that the whale was still heading N. N. W. so the boats kept on in pursuit. Our boat dropped a little astern of the larboard and bow boats, as they under stuns'ls and jibs outsailed our craft that carried only a mainsail. Mr. Miller was lagging some distance astern.

"Presently the whale rose again, this time to windward. We had again run by him. Our boat instantly headed for him, but Mr. Miller, seeing our movements, anticipated us and as he was nearest the whale, we lay to to watch his success.

"Mr. Miller, till this moment, had seen nothing of the whale. He at first thought it was a sulphur-bottom that was blowing, and he made ready to shoot him.

"Old Ellis, however, recognized the spout as that of a sperm whale, and this opinion of the old whaleman directly caused every man to paddle as if for life. We at first thought that Mr. Miller was going on to the whale's eye, and Mr. Tilson exclaimed impatiently at the apparent blundering of the second mate.

"Soon, however, the boat rounded in astern of the whale, and then began slowly to draw near his hump. We were but a short distance off, and, excited at the sight, all stood up to watch the chase.

"How slow that boat seemed to move! The whale kept on going, but he had now been up some time. We feared that every blow would be the last one, and that the whale would sound. The

boat appeared to crawl like a snail, and yet slowly drew alongside the crooked hump, and then the bows appeared forward of the hump. Then an instant move, and old Ellis, drawing back, as the boat's bows were not two fathoms from the whale, let first one iron fly and then, snatching up his second, buried it chock up to the hitches in the whale's back. 'Hurrah, he's fast!' we shouted.

"Then we saw the whale raise his hump, the two irons sticking fast, and white-water a moment before he sounded. I had been breathless almost, till I saw Ellis shove in his irons, and then I shouted from pure joy. We now took down our sail and mast, got out our oars, and pulled for Mr. Miller's boat. The bow boat came up as we did, and we stationed ourselves on either bow of the waist boat, ready for the whale when he came up. The mate lay on his oars a little outside of us.

"The waist boat had run but little, and it seemed that the whale was sounding deep, for the line ran straight down from the bows into the water. Our disappointment may be imagined as we saw Mr. Miller haul in his line slowly that was now slack, and two irons finally rise under his bows. The whale was loose. Both irons had drawn, after about 150 fathoms of line had been taken out from the large tub.

"We had little time to exchange our mutual chagrin for the whale appeared half a mile to leeward, heading as before, N. N. W., still undiverted from his course. We all set sail in pursuit. Twice the whale rose, spouted for while, and then went down.

"The sun was now low in the heavens, and the night breeze began to freshen over the darkening sea. The third time the whale rose both the mate and second mate, who had gained on the whale at every rising, dashed at him, but the mate seeing Mr. Goland had the best chance, kept back while Mr. Goland went on. Again we had the excitement of watching a boat till it made fast. The whale still spouted low and regularly on his unvarying course.

"Mr. Goland laid his boat alongside the whale's hump, till both whale and boat were in the same foam and yeasty water. Manuel stood up, and, as the boat dashed close to the big hump, he gave the whale his first iron, close by the jagged holes from which Ellis's irons had drawn.

"The boat rolled as he darted, and Manuel stumbled onto his second iron, but, recovering himself, he caught up the iron and

darted it. The whale started as the first iron struck him, and, raising his flukes and bringing them down within a foot of Manuel's head, splashed water all over him, and so blinded him that he could hardly see to throw his second iron. However, the iron struck and went in.

"For a moment the whale lashed the water and would have stove the bow boat, had not Mr. Goland swept her off with his steering oar. But as we dashed on to make fast, the whale went down, raising his terrible flukes as he sounded. He appeared again in a moment, shoving suddenly out from the sea first his under-jaw, then his long, square-built head.

"He began slowly to open and close his jaws, the underjaw being from sixteen to eighteen feet in length, shutting into the upper and immovable jaw, disclosing his white mouth and the great sockets into which his teeth fitted, with a force that could have crushed any one of us or the boats like an egg-shell.

"Twenty feet from the sea rose this tower of mottled blubber, white jaws and glistening teeth, and then sunk back and was instantly succeeded by the broad flukes flung high above the sea and waving to and fro, as if the immense owner was either in great pain or rage. These, too, disappeared in foam, and, as the whale sounded, Mr. Goland perceived, to his intense mortification, that the whale was again loose. Both of Manuel's irons had drawn.

"The whale rose again close to the waist boat and dashed by its bows so close that Ellis might have made fast again. But he was sitting down, not expecting the whale so soon. Away went our game, now fairly roused, dead to windward. We saw, sometime afterwards, his spout about a mile to windward, and this was the last of him. We saw him no more. It was useless to follow him.

"It was now blowing stiffly. There was a heavy swell on, and night was closing about us, so we reluctantly gave up the pursuit. What a disappointment! An enormous prize had fairly slipped through our fingers. That fellow carried 120 barrels of sperm oil in his jacket, if not more, for his blubber had that humpy, corrugated appearance that denotes very fat and rich substance. His head alone would have made 50 barrels.

"We now set out for the ship, pulling to windward. We soon made out the ship's upper sails, as she came down before the strong wind under all sail. I had not expected to reach the ship that night,

but all safely got aboard by 7:30, the men so tired by incessant work all day that they staggered like drunken men when they reached the ship's deck.

"The old man and woman were of course disappointed; so were all hands. Four irons had drawn—a very unusual thing. We supposed they had drawn because the blubber was too rich and soft to hold against the strain of the line, and the whale's violent movements. Thus ended our chase of *Masafuera Jack*."

# A CRUISE OF TROUBLES IN THE BARCLAY

*Consisting Mainly of Extracts from a Whaling Log Book  
of the 1830's.*





**I**N *The Medley, or New Bedford Marine Journal*, of the date of October 18, 1793, is the following announcement: "Tomorrow morning between the hours of 7 and 8, the new and beautiful ship *Barclay*, burthen 270 tons, will be launched from the shipyard of Colonel George Claghorn. The satisfaction of viewing this token of our increasing commerce will, we doubt not, induce many to watch the first beams of the Rising Sun."

Thus did the ship *Barclay*, a doughty and famous whaleship, come into the world. Good masters commanded her, though none left as well remembered a name as the man who shaped her hull. George Claghorn, in whose shipyard the *Barclay* was built, was the same George Claghorn who built the Frigate *Constitution* at the Charlestown navy yard. He settled in New Bedford when the whaling industry was rising there, profiting by the boom times and by the great promise held for the fast-growing business.

The *Barclay* was built for Mr. William Rotch of Nantucket, who was at the time in the midst of a checkered business career. He had been discouraged by the hard times that had reigned in Nantucket during and immediately after the Revolution. The whaling business of the little island community was in the doldrums and, in 1785, Mr. Rotch went to England, hoping to transfer his interests to that country, where demand for oil was comparatively large, and where bounties were offered to vessels engaged in whaling. Mr. Rotch was unsuccessful in arranging matters to his satisfaction in England, and he turned to France. Here his welcome was gratifying, and for a number of years Mr. Rotch and his friends carried on a profitable business from Dunkirk. The war between England and France brought an end to the success, however, for Rotch's vessels were marked ships, and were captured by the British whenever opportunity offered. Mr. Rotch, in 1793, returned to London, to recover his vessels which had been brought home as prizes by the British cruisers. In 1794, he gave up his foreign projects and came back to his native soil on the new vessel from Claghorn's shipyard, the *Barclay*.

The most famous period in the *Barclay*'s history was when David Glasgow Farragut paced her deck as her commander. The episode came about in singular fashion. When Captain Porter took the frigate *Essex* around Cape Horn to safeguard American interests in the Pacific during the War of 1812, there were some Yankee whale-ships in those waters. Peru was acting as an ally of Great Britain, and one particular Peruvian vessel had captured two New Bedford whalers, the ship *Barclay* being one of them. The *Barclay*, with a prize crew on board, was just entering the harbor of Callao when she was recaptured by the *Essex*. Farragut was on the *Essex* and was more or less a *protégé* of Captain Porter. To the youngster (for Farragut was then only twelve years of age) fell the task of taking the *Barclay* to Valparaiso. He was sent on board the whaler with a few men from the frigate, and placed in command. The New Bedford captain, whose authority was thus clipped, and whose duties lay solely in giving advice to Farragut in regard to navigation, naturally resented the arrangement. He tried to make trouble for his young master, but the boy Farragut showed the strong qualities that were later to sweep him on to fame, and he sailed the *Barclay* to Valparaiso with his authority intact.

The *Barclay* made 20 whaling voyages in all from New Bedford. Once, she was absent from her home port 65 months, leaving in 1844

and returning in 1850. It is, perhaps, safe to say that this is the longest whaling voyage from an American port; at least, the writer has never heard of one longer. She returned for the last time in 1857, and was broken up in 1864, 71 years after her launching, and within a stone's throw of that shipyard whence she slipped into the water under the "first beams of the rising sun."

One of the log books of the ship *Barclay*, a record of a voyage to the Pacific, 1834-37, is preserved in the museum of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society at New Bedford. In many ways, this log book is exceptional. Its entries are made with some attention to detail, and the voyage itself was eventful. Its outward appearance is striking, too, being of large dimensions, fifteen inches wide and twenty-three long. Its paper is hand made, roughly ruled with pen and ink, and the limp covers are made from a piece of sail cloth. Like most of the log books of the period, its spelling is quaint, and there is a strange use of capital letters as well as a total lack of punctuation. The first entry, dated September 13, 1834, gives an idea of the writer's style:

"Saturday on board: Now, Lying at anchor, Bedford Harbor below palmers Is 5 fathoms of Water first part of these 24 hours strong Breezes from the N W the weather fine most of the Crew on Board employed Ships Duty mid part light airs from the N W Latt part a fine breeze from the N at 5 o'clock Pilot come on board Commenced heaving a head at six o'clock Broke ground and Bid a Due to the Land We all so much admire but with the hopes of a Short Voyage we set all sail at 9 o'clock the pilot left us steered out S W at 11 o'clock the wind shifted to the East from that to S E we steering to the S W at 12 o'clock to Gayhead light House Bore E 1-2 N Dist 8 Miles the No mans Land Bore E S E—saw number of Vessels steering different Courses so Ends this day with unpleasant Fealings . . . . Sweet Home"

Of course, the majority of the passages in this log book are devoid of special interest. Winds, weather, courses and daily routine are recorded faithfully; merely the high lights of the *Barclay's* cruise will be copied here, in the words of the log writer, but with the spelling and punctuation polished up, in order that the record may not seem like a Chinese puzzle.

"Monday, Oct. 6th. Commenced with fine weather and light winds from the south; we, with all sail set. One brig in sight. At 2 o'clock, we lowered our boats to exercise the crew, which was very

necessary. At supper, while in the act of sharing the victuals forward, one of the crew began a fight with some of the green hands, it being the third time. We put him in the rigging, not intending to flog him, but his saucy tongue caused him a few stripes with the fore parts of a small codline, after which he acknowledged that he was to blame. We then let him go forward, where he made a number of threats. This promising youth's name is Bradford Trafford. Middle part, light airs from the south, with the blacksmith very saucy, he being the worse for rum. Latter part, calms. Lowered the boats and chased grampuses for whales.

"Tuesday, Oct. 7th. All hands employed fitting the rigging. The mizzen topmast backstays parted, and we found them to be rotten, which corresponds with the running rigging. We fitted new ones and damned the riggers for it. We now have rove one-half of our running rigging that is in the ship.

"Wednesday, Oct. 8th. . . . A bad sea. One watch below, the rest employed in domestic duty. Nothing to be seen but the wide ocean. Our old rigging parts very often—it is not otherwise to be expected. So ends this long and dismal day in hopes of a fair wind.

"Sunday, October 26th. . . . Latter part, steady breezes; the weather fine. Got up our potatoes and found them two-thirds rotten.

"Thursday, Dec. 18th. Begins with strong winds and heavy squalls from the S. W. Double-reefed topsails set. Some hail. One watch employed securing the boats. At 4 o'clock, wore ship to the west. Middle part, heavy winds from the south and S. W. Latter part, at 5 o'clock, wore ship to the S. E. Nothing in sight nor hearing but the howling winds. Thus ends this long day."

Towards the first of the year, the *Barclay* rounded the Horn. Her days were spent quietly enough. Hardly a whale was sighted; just one was captured during this first part of her voyage, and that one only gave her 30 barrels of oil. It seemed like a real hard-luck voyage. The *Barclay* anchored in the harbor of Callao in February, 1835; before the vessel put to sea again, six men had deserted. Perhaps they became soldiers of fortune, for the log mentions that there was "a revolution on shore." On February 28th is this entry: "Put the runaways' things up at auction, and sold them to the highest bidder." From Callao, the ship cruised slowly toward the Galapagos Islands.

"Wednesday, April 1st. . . . Nothing but ships in sight . . . We have not seen the spout of a sperm whale this side of the land.

"Saturday, April 4th. . . . Set all sail to get clear of these islands, being well satisfied that there are no whales here, and now we are all sail for the Western Ground. Five ships in sight.

"Sunday, April 12th. . . . No whales yet.

"Friday, April 17th. . . . At 3 o'clock we saw a shoal of sperm whales a-going to the windward quick. Lowered the boats and chased them till sunset, and then came on board, down in the mouth. Thus we saw whales for the first time this side of the land, and got none. Is this not hard for the poor? Middle part, lay with the maintopsail to the mast. Latter part, steered S. W. at 9 o'clock, saw two ships ahead, and ran for one of them, a-cutting. At 12 o'clock, saw a whale breach to the leeward of them, and ran for it. Thus ends this day.

"Saturday, April 18th. These 24 hours begin with strong breezes from the S. E. at 1 o'clock, saw a shoal of whales close to one of said ships. Their boats struck and got one. We chased the rest to leeward. At sunset, we gave up the chase."

Though the ship *Barclay* was doomed to rough treatment at the hands of fate, yet twice towards the first of May she captured a whale, and consequently twice, at this time, the crude impression of a picture of a whale appears stamped on the log book pages. But the following is the usual luck of the *Barclay*:

"Friday, May 15th. Whales and ships. This day begins with strong breezes at S. E. Three ships in sight, one off the lee beam, to work among whales. We ran for her. She struck one, and, after being to him two hours, lost him. We took an active part in chasing him, but in vain.

"Thursday, May 21st. . . . Latter part, at 6 o'clock, saw whales. Lowered the boats and struck a large one. He sounded and took the line. We struck him again, and the iron broke. We saw a ship at the time. Thus ends, with the boats in chase of the said whale, he having one line and four irons attached to him.

"Friday, May 22nd. Begins with fine weather and strong breezes at S. E., the boats in chase of the said whale. At 2 o'clock, we struck him again, but drawed the irons. In hauling them in we saved one of the lines. The boats got nearly on several times afterwards. At dark we gave him up with the loss of one line and five irons."

And again, later, at the Galapagos Islands:

"Monday, July 13th. Begins with fine weather and light winds; we, cruising for whales S. W. of Charles Island from 10 to 30 miles distant. Saw whales and chased them. Saw a ship to the south chasing whales. Middle part, light breezes from the N. E. Latter part, more whales. Again chased them. We now have seen whales five days running, and lowered our boats nine times, and got nothing. Thus ends this day."

There was much hard feeling and dissatisfaction on board the *Barclay*, some of it doubtlessly due to the lack of oil. At Charles Island, there was another wave of desertion, but this time the runaways were caught, and the ringleader put in irons. From the Galapagos group, the course of the *Barclay* was to be westward, and in November the ship was cruising about the Society Islands.

"Sunday, Nov. 15th. . . . At 2 o'clock, saw Point Venus bearing S. by W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  W., distant 12 miles. At 5 o'clock, took the pilot. At 6, came to anchor in the harbor of Otaheite in ten fathoms of water. Middle part, calms. Latter part, most of the crew on shore on liberty. At 9 o'clock, the *Ann* got in here. We found the bark *Washington*, of Hudson, with 500 bbls., 17 months out.

"Monday, Nov. 16th. . . . The liberty men came off all sober, for the want of rum.

"Sunday, Nov. 22nd. . . . Middle part, calms. Betwixt 8 and 9 o'clock, while the captain was out of the ship, the third mate took the boat from alongside without liberty and went on shore, taking with him all his clothing, and one of the crew by the name of George W. Crocker. This is not unexpected, for it has long been talked of by the third mate. Latter part, the winds light. One watch on liberty. Sent the natives in search of the said deserters. Thus ends this day, and no tidings of them, and I hope there never will be again of the third mate."

There were two more desertions while the *Barclay* lay in Otaheite Harbor, and sailing was consequently delayed. The runaways were not caught, and the captain busied himself shipping new men to fill out his crew.

"Saturday, Nov. 28th. Begins with fine weather and light winds from the eastward. At 4 o'clock, the captain came off with two more men, natives of the island, whom he shipped at \$10 a month. We now steered out to the north.

"Saturday, Dec. 5th. Begins with fine weather and strong breezes from the east; we, with all sail, steering for Hervey Island. At 1 o'clock, went in with one boat and met with one canoe by the natives. We found there were no hogs to be got on the island. At 4 o'clock left for Aitutaki. Steered W. by N. Middle part, at 9 o'clock, hove to with the headyard aback. Latter part, at 8 o'clock, passed down the north side of the island. The captain went on shore for hogs. Found the natives very friendly and a-keeping this day for Sunday. For this reason, we got nothing. Thus ends, with the boats on shore.

"Sunday, Dec. 6th. . . . Laying off and on. . . . Latter part, the boat brought off a load of hogs and fowl. Went ashore again. Thus ends, with the ship full of natives from the shore."

The early months of 1836 the *Barclay* spent cruising about the South Sea Islands. At a few places, the ship lay in the harbors for brief spaces of time in order to get fresh food or water. But there was no chance for shore liberty for the men; apparently the captain was apprehensive of more desertions. Varying success met the frequent lowerings after whales. And in April, the *Barclay* had returned to the neighborhood of the Galapagos Islands once more, a favorite whaling ground during the eighteen-thirties.

"Friday, April 29th, 1836. Notice this. This day begins with strong breezes from the E. N. E. We, steering to the S. E. with all sail set. Nothing in sight. . . . Middle part, winds at S. E. Steered up E. N. E. Latter part, much the same. At 8 o'clock, the captain sent the steward forward to call the men aft, or one of them, to see their meat weighed. But their reply was that they would not come. This was told the captain. He immediately called to them to come aft, and repeated three times, and then went after them, and took a broom at one of the blacks. The men all refused to go aft, but soon went. Their complaint was that one pound and a quarter of meat was not enough. They were very insolent and made their threats. They now went forward, not wishing to see their weight of meat. The said black was insolent to the captain when going forward. He was called to come aft again. His reply was that he would not, and he fled for the forecastle. While getting him up aft, one of the men, Henry Ketcham, came to the gangway and interfered. He challenged the captain to strike him. At this, the captain took hold of him and dropped his weapon. The fellow took it up and made an attempt to strike the captain with it. From this, he was told to

go aft, but refused and went down the forecastle, took a sheath knife and said he would kill the first man that went down. But afterwards he delivered himself up to be put in irons, where he now remains in the run. Thus ends in peace."

In June, the *Barclay* anchored in the harbor of Payta. And here the customary thing—that is, customary for this voyage—happened. Seven men deserted and were not heard of again. In addition to this loss, the captain discharged three trouble makers, one of whom was the Ketcham who had struck at the captain. Ten new men were shipped to fill the vacant places, and the *Barclay* left Payta "with a new crew mostly."

Again the *Barclay* visited the Galapagos group, stopping at one of the islands for potatoes and pumpkins which were cheaper there than on the mainland. Capturing a whale was a rare occurrence, and once, when the ship *Isaac Howland* was sighted, the log book writer records that she was boiling a large whale, "the only one, in my opinion, that was on the coast." There must have been more trouble on the ship, though nothing of unusual interest is recorded during this period. Only a suggestion appears at the end of an ordinary day's entry: "Thus ends a day never to be forgotten." What happened during this memorable day is a mystery.

In December the captain decided to stop at Tacames, in Ecuador. He had difficulty in navigating his course, for on the 16th it is written, "Spoke a Spanish schooner that told us where Tacames was." And in Tacames, too, the crew was severely depleted. Seven men deserted; that is, "they stopped ashore and said they would not come aboard." It was impossible to find new men at this town, apparently, for the *Barclay* went immediately to Payta. Here three men were discharged: "We paid them off their oil."

"Thursday, Jan. 26th, 1837. . . . Got under way and went to sea (from Payta) with 20 men. . . . We are now bound to the Western Ground with 20 men only, and three of them cannot speak one word of English, to speak within bounds. We now have the poorest crew that I ever saw on board of any ship. Some objections were made to taking the anchor with 19 men. In consequence, one more was shipped, which detained the ship two hours. All of these new men are by the month. Thus ends; chains and anchors stowed.

"Thursday, Feb. 2nd. . . . Employed wetting the hold, finding the oil to leak very bad. This has been the case for three months.

"Friday, Feb. 3rd. . . . Wet the hold again. Thus ends this day, like many of the rest. Dull prospects all around.

"Saturday, Feb. 11th. . . . We employed all our hands in getting ready for coopering our oil. We moved the cook's caboose forward. . . . At daylight, commenced hoisting up oil out of the main hatchway for coopering, the ship under double-reefed topsails heading to the N. E. Thus ends, with 100 bbls. of oil on deck.

"Thursday, Feb. 16th. . . . Finished coopering. Found the leakage to be 25 bbls.

"Sunday, April 2nd. These 24 hours begin with strong winds and heavy squalls of wind and rain. All sail set excepting the fore topgallantsail and flying jibs. Winds from the S. E. We, steering to the N. E. At 7 o'clock, the weather looked black and squally. At 8 o'clock, the squall struck the ship heavy, all sail out at the time and one boat's crew on deck, which let go everything. Called all hands and commenced taking sail. Split the fore and mizzen topsails. Middle part, at 11 o'clock, got the ship under double-reefed main-topsail and closed-reefed fore. Took in the mizzen. Latter part, more moderate. At 6, saw whales off the weather beam, going to windward. Having no fore topsail to set, we were not able to pursue them. At 8, sent down the topsail to mend. Thus ends, all hands employed on the sail."

The *Barclay* was now ready to make her homeward passage. The port of Talcahuana was her last stopping place in the Pacific, and here men were discharged, others shipped, and one deserted. Hard luck and trouble still attended the ship, even after Cape Horn had been passed and the vessel was sailing northward with all possible speed.

"Sept. 2nd, and long will it be remembered by me. . . . The day ends with much disturbance, and no particular cause for it. At present I shall say no more on the subject.

"Friday, Sept. 8th. . . . Unbent the mizzen topsail to mend. After quarreling a half hour, we commenced mending of it. In this quarrel, I was shamefully abused both in words and deeds by the captain without any provocation. . . . Latter part, squalls from all points of the compass, accompanied with rain and thunder and lightning. Thus ends another long, disagreeable day, like many others.

"Saturday, Sept. 12. Begins with a heavy gale from the E. N. E. and from the N. N. E. Bent the main staysail. At 1 o'clock the main

topsail sheet parted before it could be taken in. It blew clear of the yard. At 2, the larboard boat went. At 3 o'clock, the wind blew a hurricane. At 4, the main topgallant mast blew off above the main topmast cap. The fore and mizzen followed shortly afterwards. The flying jib blew clear of the boom. The fore and mizzen topsails blew very much to pieces in defiance of our exertions to prevent them. Middle part, the flying jibboom blew short off with the cap. At 9 o'clock the wind moderated some and it stopped raining for the first time since the gale. Latter part, a common gale of wind. Thus ends, lying to under no sail, and a complete wreck. The two remaining boats are stove.

"Sunday, Sept. 13th. Heavy gale of wind from N. N. W. and a bad sea on. We are lying to with no sail set, heading to the S. W. Nothing to be seen. At 5 o'clock, hove the try works overboard. Middle part, heavy rains. Latter parts, much the same. Thus ends with a heavy gale.

"Monday, Sept. 14th. It still continues to blow a heavy gale from the west, and heavy rain and a bad sea on. At 5, set the main stay-sail. Middle part, much the same. Latter part, at 4, the gale abated. At daylight, saw a schooner, steering to the north. At 7, all hands commenced repairing sails and rigging. Set the fore and mainsails and jib, the only sails that were whole. The middle part of these 24 hours the ship sprung a leak in the run, about three feet below the surface of the water. The ship is now leaking about 240 strokes an hour. Thus ends. No topsails set yet.

"Tuesday, Sept. 19th. Commenced with light breezes, the weather fine. At 6, got the topsails finished and set all sails that were any use. Shifted all of the iron hoops from the steerage into the fore hold, to tip the ship by the head. . . . Thus ends with the ship leaking very badly."

A week after this damaging storm, the *Barclay* limped into her home waters of Buzzards Bay, a sorry sight. And her troubles were even now not over, for one of her crew died of consumption in sight of the harbor and was buried at sea. Finally comes the last entry in the log book:

"Wednesday, Sept. 27th. Begins with strong breezes from the S. W. At 1 o'clock, passed the lighthouse. At 2, came to anchor in the inner roads, and furled the sails. Thus ends a voyage that has been full of errors from the beginning to the end."

## A WHALING MASTER IN HIS TWENTIES

*Being Extracts From the Journal of Captain Ephraim  
Harding, of the Ship "Arab," of Fairhaven*





WHEN the Fairhaven whaling-ship *Arab* sailed out of Buzzard's Bay in 1842, she was commanded by a master somewhat above the average in intelligence. Captain Ephraim Harding was young; he had not even passed out of his twenties. But he was entrusted with a command to which older captains might well have aspired. The *Arab* was no small vessel; she was rated at 336 tons, and though there were a few Fairhaven ships of greater burden, yet there were many more that were much smaller. The cruise was to the Indian Ocean, throughout the many island groups that lie between the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon, and it was destined to keep the ship *Arab* from her home port for three full years.

In addition to being a man of merit as a whaleman and as a commander of men, Captain Harding had received a fair amount of schooling, which is apparent on the pages of a journal he kept on the voyage. He liked to write his experiences, not only as a

matter of record, but as a medium by which he could express the thoughts that arose in his mind during the wearisome length of his voyage. This story of the *Arab's* cruise quotes freely from that journal, still fortunately preserved—fortunately, in that it gives a true picture of whaling life in the forties, and was written in the midst of the strange scenes and while the events were yet warm. The journal thus begins:

“Thursday, Sept. 15th, 1842. Latter part of these 24 hours, fresh breezes from E. N. E. At 6 A. M. we got underway and stood down the river. At 8, came to, and dropped anchor under foot of the lighthouse. So ends.

“Friday, Sept. 16th, 1842. First part, fresh breezes from E. N. E. At 1 P. M. got underway and stood out of the bay. Thick weather. At 3 P. M., the pilot left, Cuttyhunk bearing E. S. E. at a distance of two and a half miles, from which I take my departure. At 6 P. M., chose watches and boats' crews. At 7, set the watch, steering south. Middle part, thick and rainy. Latter part, calms. All hands employed breaking out, stowing anchors and chains and fitting boats. One sail in sight. So ends.”

In accordance with the custom of whaling procedure, a direct passage was made to the Western Islands, as the Azores were known to whalers. The *Arab* reached Fayal on October 4th.

“Thursday, Oct. 6th. First part, light breezes. Discharged three men on account of sickness and shipped three more Portuguese. At 5 P. M., the boat came off. Made sail and stood out south, the bark *Popmunnett* in company with 260 barrels of sperm oil. Middle part, calms. Latter part, light airs from the south, steering W. N. W., by the wind. Employed in ship's duty. So ends.”

Not satisfied with the results of his recruiting the ship at Fayal, Captain Harding steered his course to the Cape de Verdes, reaching St. Nicholas in about three weeks. Here the ship lay off and on the island, with no chance of shore leave for the men, except for those who were lucky enough to be sent to the town for trading. Hogs, fowls, bananas and pumpkins were taken on board at St. Nicholas, and as soon as possible the *Arab* left the island, with the bark *Popmunnett* still in company with her. A course was held that brought the vessel to the whaling grounds off the coast of Brazil.

“Tuesday, Nov. 22nd. First part, fresh breezes; steering South. The bark *Popmunnett* in sight, which makes it much more pleasant to us to have a ship of our country in sight when we are in deep

meditation, thinking about home and our absent friends. We are now about 70 days out from home with no oil. It makes me feel bad—yes, very bad—to look forward and see how much different I shall spend these winter months to those I spent one year ago. Here to be wrapped up with care and anxiety and troubles of the seafaring life, while on the other hand to be seated by my fireside with my wife and child, who would be ready to take an equal share of all my troubles and to sympathize with me in all my misfortunes of life. Middle and latter parts, pleasant.

“Saturday, Nov. 26th. First part, fresh breeze from the N. E., steering S. by W. Thick misty weather. At 4 P. M. saw ring-eyed hagletts and one albatross. Those birds indicate that we are near the place where whales inhabit at this season of the year. I mean the right whale. Middle part, light gales from the North. Took in sail. Latter part, the same; thick rainy weather. Several birds in sight.

“Monday, Nov. 28th. First part, pleasant breezes from the N. W. Steered S. E. Painted the larboard boat. At 5 P. M., chose quarter-watches. At dark, took in sail. Set the quarter-watch. This brings to mind old times, say about two years ago, that we used to take in sail and come below and talk over our nonsense about the women.”

Whales were sighted soon afterwards, and the boats lowered many times for the chase. But it was not until December 6 that the first whale was caught, breaking at last the long chain of hard luck that had followed the *Arab* from the beginning of her cruise.

“Sunday, Dec. 18th. First part, commences with light airs from the W. S. W., steering N. E. Unbent and bent the main topgallantsail. At sunset saw gams of whales, and lowered. It being too late, came on board and took in sail for the night, with a hope of seeing them again in the morning, and, with divine will, to get two or more of them. Middle part, calms. At daylight, made all sail. Saw plenty of finbacks, which I suppose are the same that we took to be right whales the night before. We have been cruising about here for about a month in hopes to fall in with a body of whales, but I am of an opinion that there are not many whales on this ground. I shall now make a direct course for the Tristan Islands.”

In three days the *Arab* sighted Tristan da Cunha, and the bark *Popmunnett*, so cheering to Captain Harding, was there too. The

latter vessel had had better luck, having three hundred barrels of sperm oil in her hold, in addition to the oil from a right whale, which she was just boiling.

"Monday, Dec. 26th. Commences with strong breezes from S. W., steering E. by S. At 4 P. M., moderate. Made all sail towards the Crozettes, with the expectation of falling in with whales. We are now out about three months with 140 barrels of whale oil, and I am very homesick. We have just parted company with Captain Flanders, who expects to be at home with his family and friends in the course of four months, while we are to stay 24 months longer. Middle part, the wind from the N. E. Latter part, the same. At 7 A. M., saw one whale. Lowered and struck, but the whale ran bad and we parted from him."

Cruising off the Crozettes, Captain Harding found what he sought. Whales were fairly plentiful around the islands, and the boats were often lowered. Nor was the *Arab* the only vessel that was filling her hold in these waters. The *Herald* of Fairhaven was cruising there, Captain Harding records, and the *Romulus*, the *Superior* and the *France* of Sag Harbor, the *Tenedos*, the *John and Elizabeth*, the *Stonington*, the *Halcyon* and the *Neptune* of New London, the *Fenelon*, the *Milwood*, the *Roscoe*, the *Majestic*, the *Dragon* and the *Cicero* of New Bedford, and the *Aeronaut* of Mystic. During April, the *Arab* kept a northerly course, working towards Madagascar. The event of the greatest importance, from the crew's standpoint, was when the brig *Vesta*, of Edgartown, was sighted, for a jolly gam was held between the two vessels, and, what is more, the brig was newly come from home and bore a packet of letters for the *Arab*'s men. The *Arab* stopped for water at St. Augustine Bay on Madagascar, and a more prolonged visit was made for supplies on the island of Johannah, at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel.

"Thursday, June 15, 1843. First part, fine breeze, steering in for the anchorage of Johannah. At 4 P. M., sent the boat in. Saw the *Sally Ann* of New Bedford and the *Bengal* of Salem lying there. Captain Borden, of the *Sally Ann*, after leaving here some days previous on a cruise for whales, fell in with them to windward of this island. He lowered his boats in pursuit, and after chasing them for several hours, came up with them. In the act of striking the whale, he received a blow on his legs from the whale's flukes, which broke them both. His right leg was broken in two places below

the knee, and the upper bone of his left leg was broken. He immediately left the whales and came on board the ship, crowded on all sail for this place, where he arrived in fifteen hours after the accident. He immediately had assistance from an English doctor who was on board a vessel here. He is now getting along well. Latter part, squally. Standing off and on.

“Tuesday, July 18th. First part, heavy gales from S. S. W., heading S. E. under reefed foresail, close reefed main topsail and main spencer. Middle part, the same. Our crew is in perfectly good health, eating at the rate of eight barrels of meat a month in this warm weather, besides bread and other things too numerous to mention. This day I have been practising on the flute and reading my letters, which I received from home, for the 50th time. The letters cheer my drooping spirits a little, while lying here in this dismal weather with no prospects of being any better. In reading my letters today, it was quite laughable to read over their excuses in writing to us. One says, ‘I have not got any news to write.’ Another that ‘My pen is poor and it is getting late and the children are troublesome and I have no time to write,’ and a thousand other things. What would they say if they were here, tossed to and fro by the waves beating against our frail bark, where it takes one (hand) to hold the inkstand and another to brace while one is writing? They might then lay down their pen and say ‘It is impossible! I cannot write.’ Think of this, friends, when you sit down to write to your friends who are absent from you. Latter part, much the same.

“Friday, July 21st. First part, strong gales from S. W., heading S. S. E. Middle part, the same. Latter part, strong gales, and I am very homesick, for the wind and weather are such that we can’t do anything but sit down and think about home. It is often said that when we are at sea we don’t often think about home. I can answer for myself that there is no one that thinks more about it than I do. Today it is my wife’s birthday if Memory serves me right. I have read a few chapters in the Bible, which I often do.

“Saturday, July 22nd. First part, strong gales from S. W., heading S. S. E. under short sail. Middle part, the same. Latter part, more moderate. Set the mainsail and jib with a prospect of there being better weather. For a few days past the ship has labored very heavy and has badly injured some of our boats by rolling them under water. Our fourth boat is in a very bad state.

They all have had more or less damage since we have had this long and tedious gale of twenty-five days without cessation. I think when I go into the Gulph of the Red Sea again before or during the S. W. monsoons, it will be after. We are now bound up to the Equator, and I shall cruise there a month or so, and then to the south coast of Arabia, where I am in hopes to get 1,000 barrels of sperm oil. So thus ends this day in Lat. 7:54 N., Long. 62 E.

"Saturady, Aug. 26th. We are now something over 11 months from home, and have sailed upwards of twenty thousand miles and have not seen the spout of a sperm whale, a circumstance which seldom occurs; I would venture to say, once in 500 times. I don't know as ever such an instance happened before or ever will again, taking the same route since leaving home. I will here mention for self-gratification the ground and places we have been over since we left home. In the first place, we have crossed over both the North and South Atlantic Oceans without seeing a vestige of a whale, which seldom occurs. It is often the case with a ship that in making this passage out, they see a great many whales, and I have known of instances often of a ship taking 400 or 500 barrels of sperm oil before they reach the latitude of 40 degrees South. Again, we have steered across the Indian Ocean to 46 degrees South, back again to the Head of Madagascar, and cruised there some time, through the Mozambique Channel and round the Comoro Islands without seeing the sign of whales; from thence to the Equator, to the latitude of 14 North, back again to the Equator, where ships a short time ago took upwards of 500 barrels apiece in a short time. How much longer we shall go without seeing any, I don't know. There is but one who does, the Great Creator of all things wisely ordered. But I shall endeavor to be contented, as I hope all is for the best. We are now bound to the island of Socotra after water."

Still disturbed with the anticipation of bad weather, Captain Harding reached Socotra, and anchored his ship in Tamarinda Bay, where he sent a raft ashore for water. Before the watering had been completed, his fears were justified, for a hurricane came up, the ship dragged, and the second anchor was let go. There were strenuous times in the bay before the *Arab* was able to leave, but better times were at hand, waiting to change the crew's gloominess into the brightest of joy. Sperm whales were abundant on the

coast of Arabia at that time, and Captain Harding had the good fortune to be there, too.

"Tuesday, Nov. 7. First part, pleasant. At 1 P. M., saw two dead whales that we killed on Sunday last. Took them to the ship and cut them in. Stood off shore. Middle part, light breeze. Latter part, the same. At 8 A. M., saw another dead whale. Took him to the ship and cut him in. So ends, the land 15 miles distant.

"Thursday, Nov. 9th. First part, light breeze, standing off shore. At 1 P. M., rose a whale, and lowered. At sunset, struck and killed him. Took him to the ship. Set the watch. Middle part, moderate. At daylight hooked on and cut the whale in. Latter part, fine weather. At 8 A. M., rose whales. Lowered, struck and killed nine of them. So ends."

The foregoing passages are but two of the busy days which the *Arab* had during the last few months of 1843. Hardly a day passed but what the ship was either lowering her boats for the chase or else smoking with the fire from her try-pots. Captain Harding does not record his jubilation over the turn his affairs had taken, as he previously recorded his despondency, but the probable reason is that he did not have time. At last the time came for the ship to be supplied once more and for the men to have a run on shore.

"Tuesday, Jan. 2nd, 1844. First part, light breeze from the eastward, steering in for Macculla Bay. At 3 P. M., bent the chains. At 5 P. M., came to anchor in 12 fathoms of water. At 6, a boat came off to us and told us that we were too far over on the westward side of the bay. We hove up and warped over to the eastward side. Let go the anchor in 15 fathoms with the ship's stern in 13 fathoms. Wind off the land from the S. E. Middle part, calms. In the morning, sent the boats on shore to see if there was any one that could talk English. She did not remain on shore but a few minutes and brought information that the place was very sickly, that the people were dying rapidly with the smallpox, likewise that we could not get any recruit. Bullock, sheep and every article of refreshment were very dear. Water could be procured by paying three dollars a cask, containing 240 gallons. Notwithstanding these inconveniences, the place is considered to be the best on this coast. By appearance, it is quite a business place, the trade being carried on between India and the Red Sea in rice, cotton cloth, etc. The people are Arabs and of course embrace the

Mahometan religion. But like all other Arabs, money is their god. Thinking it was not prudent for us to lay here, fearing that some of us might catch the contagious disease, I therefore ordered the ship to be got underway immediately and proceed to some other port. According to the natives' account we were the first American ship that ever displayed the Stars and Stripes in this port, and what is quite singular, the ship bears the same name as the people of the country, the *Arab*. Latter part, got underway and stood out to sea. So ends.

"Wednesday, Jan. 3rd. First part, pleasant breeze from the eastward. Made up my mind to steer for Aden, a place which had been lately taken from the Arabs by the British as a place of rendezvous for their steamers which carry the overland mail to and from China. Middle part, pleasant, steering S. W. Latter part, the same. So ends."

Till the end of January, the *Arab* remained at Aden, getting a complete supply of foodstuffs and water, and giving the men their first real taste of shore liberty in more than a year. During the spring and following summer, the chase after sperm whales was continued, its monotony broken now and then by a visit to some isolated harbor after fresh water. Luck was again against the *Arab*; the whaling grounds were "dry."

"Friday, Oct. 11th. First part, fine breeze and pleasant weather, wind from N. W. Heading N. N. E. We are very much down in the mouth; no sperm whales. If that won't try a man's patience, I don't know what will. Here we have been cruising from April to the present time and have only taken about 75 barrels. Any one would reasonably expect 400 instead of 75 in that length of time, and on good whale ground the principal part of the time. But, however, we must take it as it comes. It is all for the best, no doubt. For, if we were always to be prosperous, we should not know what it was to be unfortunate. We must take the bitter with the sweet. Middle part, moderate. Latter part, the same. So ends.

"Wednesday, Oct. 23rd. Plenty of finbacks in sight. It is to be hoped that we soon shall see sperm whales that we may get what oil we want and go home, for to be parted from those whom we hold dear for the term of three years is too tedious. Every day finds us in anticipation and almost every hour to hear the cheerful cry from the mast-head, 'There she breaches! There she

blows! Humps! Flukes! And what a joyful sound it is to those who traverse the trackless ocean in pursuit of whales, that they fill their ships and that they may be wafted by the gentle breezes to the bosom of their dear companions and friends.

"Thursday, Oct. 24th. First part, pleasant weather. Wind hauled to the N. W. At 5 P. M. tacked ship to the S. W. We have been beating about here this eight or ten days to weather Cape Isolette, standing in shore and off, expecting every day the monsoons will change to the N. E. But instead of that, the same westerly winds continue to blow against us with a small current setting with the wind. We have been in amongst finbacks now for several days and seeing dhows passing to the eastward, but we have not seen a vestige of any sperm whales for three months, and when we shall see them no one knows, but Him who knows all things. How much different the season this year to what it was last! Last year on the 14th of this month we had a fine breeze from the N. E., and at this time of the same month we were boiling out two forty barrel whales and a good prospect before us. But we all keep good spirits, for what we don't get here, we shall get somewhere else. This day, the 24th of October, is my birthday. Thirty years of age.

"Saturday, Nov. 2nd. First part, fine breeze from the eastward. At 4 P. M., raised whales and lowered. Struck three and got one boat stove, losing the whale and line. At dark, took the two whales to the ship. Took in the stoven boat.

"Monday, Nov. 4th. First part, fine breeze from eastward, standing in towards the island of Halway. At sunset, rose whales and lowered and struck two. At dark, we saved one, but cut from the other, losing two irons. Oh dear! Our craft is going fast and but few whales."

Many such passages did Captain Ephraim Harding write in his journal during the ensuing months. He cruised far and wide in the Indian Ocean, skirting the Island of Ceylon, and, angered by the large number of whaling vessels already on that ground, he headed south again. Still his luck did not change, not until the month of March, 1845. The first whale to break the long monotony was captured on the 6th of that month. Other captures soon followed, and then:

"Friday, March 28th. First part, pleasant weather with breeze from S. S. E. Heading S. W. by the wind. Middle part, the

same. Latter part, fine breeze. At 7 A. M., tacked ship to the eastward. At 8, rose a breach off the weather bow. At 9, saw sperm whales. At 10, lowered the boats in pursuit. At 11, two boats struck and killed two whales and waifed them. The other two boats in chase. So ends.

"Saturday, March 29th. First part, fresh breeze. At 1 P. M., the other two boats struck and killed three whales. At 4, the other two boats struck and again got two whales, which makes seven in all. At sunset got all the whales to the ship."

A splendid day's work, this; enough to cheer the hearts of the morose fellows on the *Arab*.

The cruise of the ship *Arab* was now drawing to an end. The hold was nearly full, and Captain Harding begins to show signs of nervousness in his journal desiring only a few hundred barrels more before he turns the bow homeward. In June he neared the Cape of Good Hope. In August he reached St. Helena, where letters from home were received. "It was upwards of two long years before my arrival at this island that I had heard from my wife and family," he writes under the date of Aug. 17th.

On Oct. 2, 1845, the ship *Arab* sailed up Buzzard's Bay—home. Her catch during the voyage was 1,400 barrels of sperm oil, 700 of whale oil, and 6,000 lbs. whalebone.

## THE OPENING OF THE ARCTIC

*Being an account of the Superior's boldness and of the  
Ocmulgee's glorious luck.*





ON October 4, 1848, the Ship *Superior* of Sag Harbor arrived in the port of Honolulu, bearing news of the greatest importance to whalers. She had come straight from the Arctic, the first whaleship ever to venture into those northern waters, and the story she had to tell about the richness of the Arctic as a whaling ground made the fleet buzz with excitement. Visions of quick catches, of easily-secured wealth came to the whalers at the Sandwich Islands when they heard of the *Superior's* discovery. There was something romantic, too, in the opening of a new region. The whales of the Arctic overshadowed the gold-fields of California in the whalers' imaginations. And the news came just in the nick of time, for already the whaling fleet was suffering heavily from the losses due to the gold fever.

The discovery of the great schools of whales in the Arctic was not made purely accidentally, as was the discovery of nearly every other new whaling ground. Captain Royce of the *Superior* had for many years cherished the idea of penetrating the Arctic in quest of whales. He had once read the narrative of Beechy's Voyages, in which he had come across a passage that made a lasting impression upon him. The passage, referring to Icy Cape, is as follows: "Off here we saw a great many black whales, more than I remember ever to have seen, even in Baffin's Bay.

Icy Cape is situated in about latitude 70° North and longitude 162° West. Thither Captain Royce dreamed of going when the right opportunity should come. He dared not propose his scheme to the conservative owners under whose house flag he sailed, and he knew that he would have to use diplomacy to get a crew into the untravelled Arctic. But he finally made an opportunity for himself after sailing from Sag Harbor in July, 1847. His voyage, as directed by the owners of the *Superior*, was to be confined to the South Atlantic. In the South Atlantic, however, the *Superior* met with hard luck, but while the others on board the ship were becoming disgruntled over the scarcity of whales, Captain Royce was secretly in high spirits over what he considered a good chance to get to the Arctic. He suggested to his officers that it might be well to forget the owners' instructions and try the north Pacific. The officers were only too willing to accede to the idea -- they were glad to leave the South Atlantic, and, if the owners should voice any objections at the close of the voyage, they would not have to share in the blame. It was Captain Royce's party, indeed; he alone would bear the responsibility.

In accordance with Captain Royce's plans, the *Superior* was in Behring Strait in July of the following year. Whaleships had been before in the Strait and had found many whales there, so Captain Royce had up to this time done nothing which his crew did not entirely approve. But passing on into the Arctic was a different matter; the Arctic was feared. That ocean had been entered only by a few of the most intrepid of explorers, and, in spite of their written works, very little was generally known of the Arctic currents, the ice-packs and the condition and hospitality of the natives. Captain Royce, however, met with a piece of extraordinary good fortune. He had reached the northernmost part of Behring Strait when a suc-

cession of gales drove his vessel even farther north, and, almost before his crew realized it, he was in the Arctic. To Captain Royce, the passage into the northern ocean meant the realization of a pet idea; to the others, it appeared as an accident.

As the *Superior* was passing through the Strait, immense schools of whales were sighted, swimming rapidly north. They were large fellows, and in greater numbers than the crew of the *Superior* had ever seen them. The sight of these whales roused the men to high hopes, and Captain Royce had no difficulty in persuading them to remain in the Arctic until the end of August.

Captain Royce cruised far and wide in the Arctic, from the Asiatic over to the American coast and back again, and went as far north as Latitude 70°. He realized the important effect his voyage would have on the whaling industry, and he wanted to give as complete a report as possible when he returned to civilization. Everywhere he saw whales. They were comparatively tame and yielded great quantities of oil and bone. They were the Polar or bowhead whales, known later to whalers as the whales par excellence as far as bone was concerned. For some time after the voyage of the *Superior*, the bowheads were called Royce's whales by a great number of whalers although individuals of this species had been seen and captured occasionally in the Behring Sea prior to 1848.

In reporting his voyage to the interested people at Honolulu, Captain Royce told all he could about the dangers peculiar to the Arctic. Powerful currents, thick fogs, ice floes, imperfections of charts, and the lack of information concerning the natives necessitated great watchfulness on the part of the captain. When he was passing from the Strait into the Arctic, seven canoes filled with natives came near the *Superior* and showed a rather hostile attitude. They were on their way from the American to the Asiatic coast, a passage made easy by three small islands conveniently situated between the two capes. Captain Royce said afterwards that he would have been extremely frightened if a calm had set in, leaving his ship at the mercy of these natives. He recommended that some provision be made for protecting the whaling vessels which surely would now go to the Arctic in great numbers. Indeed, the government soon did take an interest in Arctic whaling, and sent revenue service vessels and established posts for the benefit of this industry.

It did not take the whaling industry long to profit by the *Superior's* adventurous voyage. The story of the wealth in the Arctic travelled quickly far and wide, and as a result some fifty vessels were in the northern ocean during the following summer. The masters of these vessels found that Captain Royce had not deceived them; they all saw whales in abundance and all made large and profitable catches. Busy and enthusiastic was this group of Arctic whalers, the group that had first chances at the spoils. From 1849 on, Arctic whaling was one of the most important phases of the industry; later, when whalebone soared in value while oil dropped low, the bowhead fishery overshadowed all other branches. Not until the very last days of the industry did Yankee whalers cease to make the passage to the icy North.

One of the pioneer ships which went northward in 1849 was the Ship *Ocmulgee* of Holmes's Hole, Frederick W. Manter, master. She was at the Sandwich Islands when the *Superior* came back from her memorable voyage, and Captain Manter was highly impressed with the Arctic news. He, like many another captain, determined to try his luck in the new grounds as soon as the next open season began.

The *Ocmulgee's* experiences were similar to those of the other vessels in the large fleet which went northward in 1849. Her voyage has been selected because of the fact that the log-book recording it has been preserved. It gives authentically many of the incidents so novel to the whalers of the time.

Early in July the *Ocmulgee* was in Behring Strait, headed north. She ran into a large school of whales there, and the school was also headed north. Thus she was introduced to her Arctic cruise under the same circumstances as was the *Superior*, and so far, at least, Captain Royce was found correct in the reports he had brought down from the North. The *Ocmulgee* was able to kill some of the whales as she was passing through the Strait, and one of them was a large animal making about 180 barrels of oil. A few other vessels were in sight of the *Ocmulgee*, and, as the log-book, tells, they too had their share of the whales.

Once in the Arctic, Captain Manter found plenty of dangers to contend with. Observations showed that the ship was in waters for which the captain had no charts. Fogs brought all kinds of anxiety. Once, after the ship had been drifting considerably to the eastward in foggy weather, the clearing up of the atmosphere disclosed land

dangerously near. It proved to be the promontory later known as Point Hope.

Near Point Hope the *Ocmulgee* ran into an immense school of whales. The vessel was brought to anchor, and for days her crew was busy killing whales, cutting in and trying out as fast as possible. It was hard, killing work, but it was the kind of work that whalers delighted in doing, as it meant money in each man's pocket and a quick successful voyage. Whales were taken in such numbers that unboiled blubber filled the decks and a large quantity was rafted behind the ship.

The following passages from the *Ocmulgee's* log-book give an idea of what was going on during these big days:

"Wednesday, July 25th. . . . . Plenty of whales in sight, but all hands too busy even to look at them.

"Thursday, 26th. Blubber-logged and a plenty of whales in sight.

"Saturday, 28th. Blubber-logged, but were obliged to cool down six hours for the want of casks. Whales aplenty.

"Sunday, 29th. Blubber-logged and whales in every direction."

On August 12 the climax of a series of gales struck the *Ocmulgee* and nearly succeeded in bringing disaster upon the vessel. She was at anchor, and began to labor hard. A hundred barrels of oil were on deck and these were thrown overboard in order to ease her. She started to strain so hard at her anchor that it was thought better to let it go. But the windlass refused to work, but something had to be done quickly. In the face of a biting wind, Captain Manter lashed himself in the rigging, and, by means of a monkey rope, held on to his second mate who was working on the anchor cable. The second mate, armed with a heavy cutting spade, dealt blows with his full strength upon the taut chain until it finally parted. The ship was eased and rode through the gale safely.

The *Ocmulgee*, after leaving the Arctic, sailed almost directly home. Her voyage was hailed as a great success, in spite of the oil she had lost in the August gale. The importance of the Arctic as a whaling ground was assured by the voyages of the *Ocmulgee* and of the many other ships which had visited that ocean in 1849. But as the popularity of the Arctic increased, the number of whales diminished. Never again did Arctic whaling have such big days as

fell to the lot of the *Ocmulgee* when she was filled with oil and blubber in July, 1849, when her men were so busy that they could not even look at the whales. Arctic whaling continued down to the very end of the industry, but in its last years two or three whales only, providing they were sizable ones, would be considered sufficient for a profitable voyage. But those were years when the price of whalebone was advancing like a skyrocket. When the crash of the bone market came, the days of Yankee whaling in the Arctic ended.

## THE LOSS OF A GREAT ARCTIC FLEET

*How Thirty-two Whaleships Were Nipped in the Ice and  
lost in the Greatest Single Disaster the Whaling  
Industry Ever Suffered*





In the annals of whaling there is no disaster greater in its scope or more dramatic in its surroundings than the one which befell thirty-two vessels in the ice-wastes of the Arctic in 1871. The large whaling fleet that pushed northward from the Pacific in the summer of that year, thirty-nine ships and barks all told, was full of hope. Whales were known to be plentiful off Point Barrow, and the movements of the ice-packs gave a comparatively easy passage through Behring Strait and up into the Arctic Ocean. The ill luck that followed, which doomed the greater part of this fleet to destruction, was undreamed of by the host of experienced captains, masters of their craft, whose knowledge of Arctic conditions was unexcelled, and whose combined judgment could evoke no dispute. Yet the treacherous forces of nature, in the form of a moving ice-pack, were too much for human plannings, and 1,200 men, women and children were driven across the cold waters in tiny boats. Fortunately indeed it was for this host that seven vessels of the fleet had been laggards,

remaining far behind the others, and were ready to receive the refugees. Thus not a life was lost, though the financial sufferings of ship owners were overwhelming.

During the late spring of 1871 the fleet was engaged in whaling in Behring Strait, and was forging ahead toward the north as fast as the ice permitted. Toward the latter part of June the shifting of the ice allowed the vessels to round Cape Lisburne, and a little later they were in the neighborhood of Icy Cape. Here the greater part of the fleet lay at anchor, waiting for a favorable time to continue their journey. Point Barrow, where whales abounded, was their objective, an objective that they were never to reach. By August 6th, the ice, which had been closely packed into the shore, receded, and a channel was opened that enabled the vessels to make Blossom Shoals. Eight vessels, which were leading the fleet, cast their anchors or moored to the ice off Wainwright Inlet. Here the chase for whales was resumed with enthusiasm, the whalemen making the best of their time, though still awaiting the opportunity of sailing further to the northeast, as soon as the ice-pack should part from the shore.

This ice-pack is vividly described by Mr. William F. Williams, who was a boy at the time and on board the bark *Monticello*, of New London. His description, which is in Pease's *History of New Bedford*, reads as follows: "The pack ice is an enormous accumulation of cakes or floes of snow-covered, sea-frozen ice, of all sizes and shapes, but containing very few whose highest points are more than ten feet above sea level, and those have been formed by the crowding of one floe on top of another. There are very few level spots of any extent, the general effect being very rough. There are no icebergs, as there are no glaciers in these northernmost parts of either America or Asia. The pack is not, therefore, in its individual parts imposing, grand or beautiful . . . . When you stop to consider that it represents ages of accumulation, and that there is beneath the surface nearly ten times more bulk than what you can see, you realize that there is something to be considered beside beautiful effects, that there is within it a power which cannot be expressed and can only be partially comprehended."

It was this great Arctic ice-pack that the whaling masters had to reckon with in their visits to the whaling grounds beyond Cape Lisburne. In the warm summer months, the pack would separate

itself from the shore and recede northward, but the winds would sometimes interfere with the ordinary course of events and cause the pack to shift about in sudden and unexpected movements. With the fleet lying in the neighborhood of Blossoms Shoals, waiting for the next retreat of the ice-pack, passages will now be quoted from the log-book of the bark *Seneca*, of New Bedford, Captain Edmund Kelley, one of the unfortunates in the disaster.

"Monday, August 7th. Commences with fresh breezes from the N. E., and clear weather. The ship under all sail working along between the land and ice to the N. E., the distance of clear water between land and ice being about six miles wide. At 10 A.M., we commenced boiling out walrus oil. Saw the bark *Gayhead* get a whale. Several other ships in sight working to the N. E. At 6 P.M., thick fog. Came up to the solid ice barrier and got out the cutting hooks and falls and made the ship fast to the ice and furled all sail. At 7 P.M., four bowheads came out of the ice. We lowered the boats, but saw them no more, it still remaining a dense fog. The ship three or four miles to the N. E. of Wainwright Inlet.

"Tuesday, the 8th. Commences with fresh breezes from the N. E., with fog. The ship still fast to the ice, and the boats off from the ship cruising along the ice for whales. Saw the ship *Contest*, of New Bedford, get a whale. At 6 P.M., the boats returned to the ship. At 8 P.M., the *Gay Head* and *Reindeer* got whales. A large fleet of ships in sight, most of them at anchor off the ice."

The *Seneca*, with her companion ships, continued whaling operations off Wainwright Inlet for several days. They met with good success, for bowheads were fairly plentiful. But they still had the intention to push onward, thinking only of the large catches they wanted to get to the northeast, and by no means anticipating the perils that were in store for them. On August 11th, the wind shifted to the westward, driving the ice landward, and the *Seneca*'s log entry for that date reads :

"Friday, the 11th. Commences with fresh breezes from the N. W. and fine weather, the ship still fast to the ice floe, and the boats in chase of whales. The larboard boat struck and got one. At 7 P.M., got the whale to the ship and commenced cutting. At midnight, finished cutting. The wind from the S. W. The ice came down on the ship and closed her in the ice. A large number of

boats off from the fleet of ships unable to get out of the ice. Capt. Kelley and a boat's crew are off from the ship fast in the ice.

"Saturday, the 12th. Commences with fresh breezes from the S. W., the ship lying fast in the ice. At 8 A.M., Capt. Kelley and his boat's crew got on board, after hauling the boat over the ice a long distance, leaving the whale-line and sail on the ice. At one P.M., he started again with more men to get his line and sail. The hands on board employed in getting ready to bail out the whale.

"Sunday, the 13th. Commences with light winds from the N. W., the ship lying fast in the ice. Employed on board in bailing out oil. At 8 A.M., got out lines and blubber hooks and tried to warp and press with all sail on the ship to clear the ice, but found it packed too close.

"Monday, the 14th. . . . At 8 A.M., the ice loosened around the ship, and at noon got the ship in clear water and came to anchor in six fathoms."

There was now only a narrow belt of clear water between the ice and the shore, a belt that extended east to Point Belcher. The ships were confined in this belt, and the work of whaling continued with all vigor, since every one confidently expected that a smart northeaster would soon drive away the pack.

"Tuesday, the 15th. . . . Commences with fine weather, the ship still at anchor to the south of Cape Belcher; the boats off from the ship in chase of whales. Thirty ships in sight, their boats in chase of whales. At 9 P.M., the boats returned to the ship without success."

Again the ice was driven close to the fleet, forcing the vessels to go close to the beach, some of them slipping their cables in order to avoid entanglement in the rapidly approaching pack. The fleet now lay scattered in a line twenty miles long and within a strip of clear water not over half a mile wide at its widest part, and from fourteen to twenty-four feet deep. The ice was in every direction, except at the rear. The crews still went in pursuit of the giant bowheads off Sea Horse Islands and Point Franklin, although they were obliged to drag their boats and the whale-blubber across the ice for long distances.

"Friday, the 18th. . . . At 5 P.M., took the anchor and steered into four fathoms of water on account of the main body of the ice setting in from the West.

"Monday, the 21st. Commences with light winds from the N. E., with fog. At 10 P.M., sent two boats in company with two boats from the bark *Carlotta*, of San Francisco, as far north as the Sea Horse Islands to look. Took three days' provisions. The boats arrived off the islands at noon the next day.

"Tuesday, the 22nd. Commences with fresh breezes from the N. E., with thick weather. The ship still at anchor. The mate and second mate off from the ship with two boats from the *Carlotta* as far as the Sea Horse Islands. The larboard boat of the *Seneca* struck and got a whale. Took the whale to the ice and got the blubber and bone, and anchored it for the present. The boats cruising for more whales, but saw nothing.

"Wednesday, the 23rd. The boats cruising 25 miles to the Northeast of the ship. At 6 P.M., took the blubber of the whale that was anchored and started for the ship. At midnight anchored the blubber and camped on the shore for the remainder of the night for the men to cook their supper and get sleep.

"Thursday, the 24th. Commences with light winds from the N. E. and fine weather, the boats towing the blubber of a whale to the ship. Mated with the *Carlotta*. At 5 P.M., got the blubber to the *Carlotta*.

"Friday, the 25th. Commences with strong winds from the N. E., the ship still at anchor to the south of Point Belcher, distant ten miles. At 6 A.M., started from the ship with four boats provisioned for four days to go as far as the Sea Horse Islands to look for whales. At 10 P.M., the boats camped for the night on the shore about half way from the ship to the islands."

With the great disaster approaching fast, the calmness of the writer of the *Seneca*'s log-book seems indeed inconsistent with the danger that the whalers were facing. Complacently the whaleships sent out their boats to chase whales, which were numerous, and of which they were reaping a good harvest. In the above entry of the 25th, the "strong winds from the N. E." are mentioned, and these winds pushed the icefield seaward, opening a lane of from four to nine miles in width off the land. Here was the opportunity to escape from the dangers that threatened, and the native Esquimaux, predicting that the clear laneway would soon be reclosed, advised the whaling masters to return, while there was opportunity, to the open sea.

But the temptation afforded by a rich whale ground was too great for the fearless whalers, who, disregarding the advice, continued their successful hunt. The wind soon shifted; the disaster came, continuing its destructive work from the 29th of August through to the middle of September.

"Tuesday, August 29th. Commences with fresh breezes from the W. N. W., with thick weather. The ship still at anchor to the S. W. of Point Belcher. Employed on board in boiling out oil, the ice setting in from the west. The bark *Elizabeth Swift*, in getting under way, grounded a shoal. We sent a boat's crew to assist her. At 6 P.M., we hove up the anchor and got the ship under the lee of a large floe of grounded ice, and made her fast to it to clear the lighter ice.

"Wednesday, August 30th. Commences with fresh breezes from the S. E. with snow, the ship lying fast to the ice in three and a half fathoms of water. Employed on board in boiling out oil and fitting the gear for a starboard bow boat. Thirty ships in sight, all of them hemmed in between the land and the ice in shoal water, several of them boiling. Point Belcher bearing N. E., distant eight miles.

"Saturday, September 2nd. Commences with light baffling winds. The ship lying fast to the ice eight miles S. W. of Point Belcher. . . . The ship *Roman*, Captain Jernegan, is crushed by the ice and abandoned, and also the brig *Comet*, of Honolulu, Captain *Sylvia*, and sold at auction."

The loss of these vessels was the first real indication of the danger that surrounded the fleet. The freakish movements of the ice pack might direct their strength against the rest of the vessels at any time; no ship's chance was better than another's. The log-book of the bark *Henry Taber*, of New Bedford, Capt. Timothy C. Packard, also of the fleet, thus records this first damage done by the ice:

"Remarks, Saturday, September 2nd. Strong westerly winds and thick snowstorm. The ship fast to a piece of grounded ice. Middle and latter parts, light winds and fine weather. At 3 A.M., the Hawaiian brig *Comet*, lying near us, set her ensign half-mast. We boarded her, and found her crushed between two pieces of ice. Captain Packard bought from the brig one cask of bread, one of flour, and one whale-boat. Captain *Sylvia* of the brig takes passage with us, and we have shipped two men from the *Roman*."

Continuing with the bark *Seneca's* record:

"Sunday, September 3rd. Commences with light winds from the S. W., with thick weather, the ship still lying fast to the grounded ice. Thirty ships in sight at anchor and fast to the grounded ice and closed in between the land and the ice with no possibility of getting out for the present unless with strong N. E. winds to open the ice off the land—a poor prospect."

Though the ships frequently had to change their positions owing to the oncoming ice pack, yet still the whaling kept on.

"Monday, the 4th. At 9 A.M., lowered two boats in chase of whales. At 7 P.M., the boats returned to the ship without success. Got a cask of bread from the bark *Navy*.

"Tuesday, the 5th. Lowered the boats in chase of whales. The starboard boat struck and got one. At 9 A.M., got the whale to the ship and commenced cutting. At 2 P.M., finished, and kedged the ship clear of the ice and anchored in three fathoms of water.

"Thursday, the 7th. At 6 A.M., lowered the boats in chase of whales. A large fleet of ships in sight and shut in between the land and the ice. The bark *Emily Morgan* lost her second mate this day by the accidental discharge of a bomb gun, the bomb passing through his head while fast to a whale—a sad affair. At 6 P.M., let go from the ice and kedged the ship in shore and anchored.

"Friday, the 8th. Thirty ships in sight, and all crowded into shoal water by the ice with every prospect of being drove ashore. In standing in shore to clear the ice, the bark *Elizabeth Swift* grounded, but hauled off in a few hours. Eight ships in sight to the S. W. of Wainwright Inlet, one of them with her masts cut away—a wreck. Suppose she has drove on shore by the ice. The rest of them in perilous condition from the ice and the land."

The log-book of the bark *Henry Taber* records further news on September 8th:

"Remarks, Friday, the 8th. All the fore part of this day, southerly winds with rain. At 9. A. M., the piece of ice we were fast to broke up and drifted. Let go our fast, set a little sail, ran into three fathoms of water, and anchored. Saw the *Awashonks* a complete wreck, about six miles south of us. Our captain went on board of the bark *E. Swift* to assist about getting off when she ran ashore near by us. Succeeded in doing so about 4 P.M. Captain Bliven of the *E. Swift* is very sick. All the masters are planning to get news to the ships south, which are in clear water, of our

situation. It certainly looks now that the ships here can never reach clear water and must become a total loss."

To return to the log-book of the *Seneca*:

"Saturday, the 9th. The ships still all closed in between the land and the ice with no prospects of getting out. At 4 A.M., sent a boat in company with several other boats from the ships to sound and find a channel to get out the brig *Kohola* to find the outside fleet of ships, in order that they might stop and get the men from the ships in case of not being able to get the ships out. Found only 5½ feet of water off Wainwright Inlet.

"Sunday, the 10th. Every prospect of having to winter, as the ships cannot be got to clear water. At 4 A.M., Captain Kelley and Captain Williams of the *Monticello*, left the ship with their boats to go towards Wainwright Inlet to try and get out the brig *Victoria*, of San Francisco, Captain Redfield, to go and look up the remainder of the fleet that are in clear water to take the crews from the ships as soon as possible, as the new ice is making. Employed on board in fitting the boats to leave the ship. At 11 P.M., Captain Kelley returned on board.

"Monday, the 11th. Making preparations to leave the ship, getting the boats ready and provisions. Some of the ship's boats have gone to Icy Cape with provisions to land in case the ships have to be abandoned."

The following day, September 12th, the captains of the fleet held their final conference and decided that there was nothing to do but abandon their vessels. The pack ice had advanced with irresistible power, threatening to crush each ship or to ground the vessels on the shoals that fringed the shore. To spend the winter in the Arctic was impossible, as the fleet did not have sufficient provisions to last until the following spring. There was little hope that a northeast wind would come soon enough to drive the ice pack out and so save the remaining vessels. The decision of the conference was arrived at with sorrow, and, following it, orders were given for the ships to fly their ensigns union down and for the crews to make preparations to leave.

The *Seneca*'s record of this trying period follows:

"Wednesday, the 13th. Three boats away with provisions trying to reach clear water. The whole fleet of ships have their boats doing the same. As yet there is no report from the boats, and it is not known that there are any ships of the whole Arctic fleet in clear

water. Every effort has been made to find water enough to get the ships out but without success, as there are banks to cross that have only five feet of water on them. At 11 P.M., two boats returned to the ship, having landed the provisions on board of the bark *Lagoda* of New Bedford, Captain Swift.

"Thursday, the 14th. Commences with light winds from the N. E., and fine weather, the ship still closed between the land and the ice in company with twenty-nine other ships, and all making preparations to abandon ship, as there are no prospects of getting out this year. The ice at present is crowding in on the land. The ship, as she swings to her anchor, the rudder touches the ice. The wind at 10 A.M., cant to the S. E., with a falling barometer. At 1 P.M., we abandoned the ship, the wind veering to the S. W., and the barometer still continuing to fall with every indication of a S. W. gale. The boats steering along the land towards Icy Cape. At 3 P.M. on Friday the 15th, two boats' crews with the captain and mate arrived on board the ship *Daniel Webster*, Captain Marvin, the other boats going to other ships."

The log-writer of the *Seneca*, in his account of the happenings of September 14th, his last entry, does not describe fully the journey taken by the crews from their abandoned vessels to the rescuing ships. His bitter sufferings, inevitable on such an occasion, must have prevented him from going into much detail. But the story told by Mr. William F. Williams, written many years afterwards, gives this account:

"I doubt if I can adequately describe the leave-taking of our ship. It was depressing enough to me, and you know a boy can always see possibilities of something novel or interesting in most any change; but to my father and mother it must have been a sad parting, and I think what made it still more so was the fact that only a short distance from our bark lay the ship *Florida*, of which my father had been master eight years, and on which three of his children had been born. The usual abandonment of a ship is the result of some irreparable injury and is executed in great haste; but here we were leaving a ship that was absolutely sound, that had been our home for nearly ten months, and had taken us safely through many a trying time.

"The colors were set and everything below and on deck was left just as though we were intending to return the next day. Our boat contained, in addition to its regular crew, my mother, sister and I, and all our clothing, bedding and provisions, so that we were loaded nearly

to the gunwales. We got an early start on the morning of the 14th, and by rowing and sailing, the water being very smooth all the way, we finally reached Icy Cape and landed on the beach just as darkness was setting in. A tent was erected for the ladies and children, and great fires were built for the men and for cooking. We still had several miles to go to reach the ships, and as it was in the open ocean outside the ice, there were some fears as to our ability to make it with our boats loaded so deep. To add to our discomforts, mental and physical, it commenced to rain and blow, so that, taken all in all, it was a night that few of its participants will ever forget.

"By morning it had stopped raining, and although there was a good fresh breeze blowing it was decided to start out as soon as we had eaten our breakfast. Our boat made the trip under sail, and although we put in several reefs, it was a hair-raising experience. My father had decided to go aboard the *Progress*. She was still at anchor and pitching into the heavy seas that were then running in a way that would have made you wonder how we could ever get the men aboard, let alone a woman and two children; but it was accomplished without accident, or even the wetting of a foot. As fast as the boats were unloaded they were cast adrift to be destroyed against the ice pack a short distance under our lee, where the waves were breaking mast-head high."

## THE TRITON TRAGEDY

*Being the tale of a beachcomber who, dreaming of blood  
and riot, turned against his kind.*





**I**N January, 1848, occurred one of the most gruesome experiences that ever fell to the lot of a Yankee whaleship. At the same time, it was an experience which called into play the remarkable courage and ingenuity of a young third mate. This combination of gruesomeness and bravery, of a savage massacre and a heroic exploit, took place on the Ship *Triton* of New Bedford when she was cruising for whales in the South Pacific under the command of Captain Thomas Spencer.

The islands of the South Pacific were particularly dangerous to whalers in the 1840's. They had been visited and explored, and hence could not be called unknown and mysterious haunts. But the penetration of the many island groups by the white man had in many cases roused the anger of the natives, and had brought about a state of bitter hostility when it might just as easily have awakened friendliness. Of course often the first visit of the white man to an island would receive a savage reception, but just as often a first visit, started with friendly feeling on both sides, would be turned into an open conflict by a careless or arrogant act of cruelty on the part of the

whites. A ship arriving after such an unfortunate event would have to pay the penalty and be the object of revenge.

In the case of the *Triton* tragedy, there was an additional element -- the beachcomber. The islands of the South Seas harbored many men of this type, men who had deserted ships and who had no desire to return to civilization. They were desperate fellows, most of them, generally willing to try their hand at crime. Because of their superior intelligence, they were able to influence the natives they mingled with and to become leaders in all sorts of escapades. The *Triton* tragedy is a perfect example of a beachcomber working upon the lower instincts of South Sea natives and beckoning them on to crimes against his own fellow whites.

The first incident in the *Triton* tragedy occurred when the ship was in sight of Sydenham's Island, one of the King's Mill Group. Two canoes under sail came out to the ship, bringing cocoanuts and other articles for sale. Captain Spencer, fully realizing that it always was best to use extreme caution in dealing with the South Sea natives, had several cutting spades placed near at hand in preparation for any possible trouble, and at the same time tried to impress upon his men the need for watchfulness. He then allowed two of the natives to come on board, and, when some bargaining had been achieved, he allowed two others.

When the trading was finished, the natives asked Captain Spencer to tow them at least part of their way to shore. He agreed, and consequently the canoes were tied to the stern of the *Triton*, and the ship sailed for the land. A little while later, one of the canoes fouled and was disabled. Its occupants were too many to be taken up, all of them, by the other canoes, and four of them were consequently permitted to board the *Triton*. Captain Spencer wished to get rid of his guests as soon as possible, and when some other canoes came off to the ship, he made arrangements with this second group to take the first visitors home. It cost the captain a small supply of tobacco to make the arrangements, but he was more than glad to get rid of the natives.

In the second group of natives, however, was a white man, a Portuguese, who spoke good English. Captain Spencer allowed him to come on deck in order to question him about the King's Mill Islands. This Portuguese, whose name was Manuel, had been whaling, once on the Ship *Nantucket* of Nantucket, and more recently on a French ship. He had been discharged from the latter vessel about

eleven months previously, and since that time had remained on Sydenham's Island, where he had worked himself up to a position of influence among the natives. He told Captain Spencer that he had for sale a heavy fluke-chain and some spars, which had been salvaged from the Ship *Columbia* of New London, wrecked on the island in January, 1846. The captain was interested in the gear thus offered to him, and agreed to go on shore with Manuel to look at it.

Consequently, about four o'clock, Captain Spencer left the *Triton* with a boat's crew, taking Manuel with him, and went to the island. He was shown the articles that Manuel wished to sell, and purchased from the lot a whaleboat, some spars and the fluke-chain. The bargaining took some time, and it was now sundown. Captain Spencer had the fluke-chain put into the boat, and was ready to leave for the ship when he had his first suspicion of foul play. The oars were missing, and the natives, when asked for them, would neither deliver them or tell where they were. Even now the captain did not sense the real plot that had been planned against him. He thought that some of the natives were playing him a mischievous prank, but that, as soon as he talked the matter over with Manuel, all would be straightened out.

But Manuel was found to be no more complaisant than the natives. He was sullen and mysterious in his replies to Captain Spencer. He could not deliver the oars; the chiefs of the island forbade it; they wished the captain to stay on shore all night. Manuel did not choose to give Captain Spencer any further explanation of these unusual proceedings and evaded all additional questions put to him. The captain was furiously angry; he did not realize the depth of the plot against him, but he knew that his safety demanded he leave the island as soon as possible. Seeing some oars hidden in the top of a cocoanut tree, he climbed up and passed them down to his men. The natives put up a fight, and it was with great difficulty that the little band from the *Triton* succeeded in making its way to the boat with the oars.

Escape, however, was denied to Captain Spencer and his men. The tide had fallen very low, and the reef surrounding Sydenham's Island was alternately exposed and covered by a heavy surf beating across it. Night had fallen, and to get the boat over the reef seemed impossible. The boat was almost sure to founder in the surf breaking on the rocks, and lives would be lost. It was preferable, thought Captain Spencer, to risk the dangers on shore, whatever the designs

of the natives might be. Manuel must have known that the captain would not attempt crossing the reef and would return to the island, for he was prepared to meet him. Hardly had the boat arrived when Manuel, followed by a hundred or more armed natives, appeared. Captain Spencer and his men were made prisoners. Manuel himself, casting aside his secrecy, stated in these few words, "I am going on board to take your ship."

Captain Spencer was about crushed by Manuel's cold-blooded announcement. He himself was in a hopeless situation. If he found a chance to escape, he could not send a message of alarm to the *Triton*. He knew that Manuel was a type of desperado who would not listen to any reasoning or any plea for mercy. However, Captain Spencer did try all means to dissuade him from the plan of taking the ship. He promised to pay Manuel a heavy ransom or a generous supply of the ship's stores if the beachcomber in return would abandon his bold project. But Manuel's reply was that he would rob the ship at his leisure and give the savages an opportunity to indulge in their wild plundering instincts. Manuel told the captain that revenge was the motive underlying his plot. He had sold to a New Brunswick vessel, about three weeks previously, some \$300 worth of goods, according to his story, and he had been forced to watch that ship sail away without receiving the money. He was simply going to make the *Triton* pay the debt of the New Brunswick vessel, and was adopting his own means of collecting the amount due.

When daylight came, Captain Spencer went down to the shore and saw the *Triton* standing in for the land with all sail set. He was allowed the liberty of his person, but his movements were closely watched by a group of natives heavily armed. Two of his men were in company with him; the others had been taken away to some unknown place of confinement.

It was heart-breaking for Captain Spencer, in his absolutely powerless condition, to watch the events of the morning. The *Triton* came nearer until she was within a mile of the island. The second-mate could be clearly seen in the rigging as he was looking for some sign from his captain. About seven o'clock, Manuel left on his war-like adventure. He set out in the *Triton*'s boat with eleven armed natives, and rowed out to the *Triton*. Captain Spencer, straining his eyes to catch every significant movement on his vessel, waited with torturing anxiety to see what sort of reception his men would

give Manuel. The boat arrived; its occupants were permitted to climb over the side.

All day Captain Spencer watched, as the ship worked off and on the shore. He could observe nothing to indicate what was happening. He was mystified; fears and hopes came and went during his long suspense. About six o'clock the *Triton* stood very close into the land, and Captain Spencer and his companions believed it was her last tack, that Manuel was about to beach her and deliver her over to the natives for plunder. But suddenly her yards were swung round and once more she was headed out to sea. The captain could not understand this unlooked-for maneuver, but his spirits rose at the thought that the end of the tragedy had been delayed. Another anxious night passed, and on the following morning the mysterious movements of the *Triton* were still unexplained. Daylight came just soon enough for the captain to see the *Triton* passing over the horizon. Under what command, however, he had no way of knowing.

While Captain Spencer was thus waiting for news about his vessel, the deck of the *Triton* had been flowing with blood. Manuel did not immediately start the attack as soon as he arrived at the ship with his single boat-load of natives. He preferred to wait for a good opportunity, and his first efforts were to allay whatever suspicions the chief mate, Moses Wells, might have. He had prepared a long, plausible story to explain the captain's continued absence from the ship and his own presence on board. The boat had capsized in the surf the previous evening, Manuel told, and the captain had suffered certain injuries which had forced him to remain on shore. The captain wished ten empty casks sent from the *Triton* to make a raft for the chains he had purchased, and had sent Manuel to carry the message. Manuel was forced to take natives to man the boat, since the *Triton*'s men had all disappeared when he was ready to leave. Manuel also went on to explain the presence of the fire-arms -- they were brought along, he said, for protection against a band of hostile natives.

The tide was not right for the casks to be sent on shore, and the wind was blowing briskly. The mate had no choice but to allow Manuel and the natives to remain on board till the following morning, but his suspicions were not entirely allayed and he prepared fire-arms for use in any emergency. The day passed quietly enough, but around ten o'clock in the evening, the mate, who had intended to keep on the alert, went to sleep in his chair in the cabin, and Manuel

saw his opportunity. The Portuguese seized all the fire-arms, and then collected his men on the after-deck and began to arm them with cutting-spades.

The second mate had charge of the deck, and when this officer saw Manuel's strange actions he ran up to him and demanded an explanation. Manuel's reply was presenting a pistol to the second mate's head and ordering him below. The officer obeyed, expecting to secure fire-arms in the cabin and to find Mr. Wells prepared to rush on deck. Mr. Wells awoke with alarm; he noticed that his pistols had been removed and realized at once the peril. He picked up a sword which Manuel had failed to remove and ran up the companion-way. Manuel was ready for him. The Portuguese had already shot down the helmsman and the cooper and now grappled with Mr. Wells. It was a brief but furious scuffle. Mr. Wells lost his sword. Manuel seized it and, after slashing the mate badly in several places, drove him down into the forecastle. The cooper, who in spite of his wound had risen to the defense of Mr. Wells and had succeeded in killing two natives, was now overpowered and chopped into pieces in a most fiendish manner. Not one of the *Triton's* crew was now on deck; three men had jumped overboard when the affray commenced, and the rest were out of sight, presumably lurking below through fright. So cleverly had the attack been planned, and so quickly executed, that only a few minutes had elapsed.

It happened that the young third mate, Elihu S. Brightman, was asleep in one of the whaleboats when the affray commenced. The events just narrated occupied such a short space of time that Mr. Brightman did not have opportunity to do much thinking before he became the central figure in the conflict. The attacking party had no knowledge of his presence in the whaleboat, and therefore its surprise was great when Mr. Brightman armed with a lance, suddenly appeared on top of the try-works. His elevated position gave him a distinct advantage over his enemies and he succeeded in killing three men, including the leader, Manuel.

Most of the natives, infuriated by the death of their leader, now made strenuous efforts to dislodge Mr. Brightman from his commanding position. The cutting-spades, with which some of them were armed, had a much longer reach than his lance. Finally after a considerable play of thrusting and parrying, they succeeded in wounding Mr. Brightman in two places. He felt that he could no longer hold out against the natives, and, in order to save his life, jump-

ed overboard. In the meantime, most of the men who were below rushed up on deck. The melee was desperate for the *Triton's* men, as the savages were better armed. Four of the crew were killed; others wounded. The second mate, with five companions, barely managed to escape in one of the boats.

The savages were now in complete control of the *Triton*; apparently, they had nothing to fear. And early in the morning they were joined by twenty-five of their fellow islanders, who had paddled out to the ship in canoes. The work of pillaging now commenced, and plunder of all sorts was heaped up on deck and loaded into the canoes and ship's boats. The *Triton* was headed toward the island; the natives were going to beach her on the reef.

But the savages had not reckoned on the third mate, Mr. Brightman. They probably supposed he had drowned when he jumped, bleeding from two wounds, into the water. But he had been able to swim around to the rudder and cling there until all the confusion on deck had more or less subsided. Then, choosing a moment when the savages were busy with plunder up forward, he climbed over the stern. At the helm was a young Kanaka boy, a native of an island near Sydenham's, who had been shipped on the *Triton* many months before. The attacking party had trusted this boy with the helm, believing that he would faithfully aid in its scheme. Mr. Brightman, however, found the boy willing to help restore the ship to her rightful owners, and he and the young Kanaka shifted the helm and lashed it so that the vessel was now sailing straight out to sea. This sudden change in the ship's course, though unnoticed by the natives on board, was the movement which had mystified Captain Spencer when he perceived it from shore. Mr. Brightman then climbed into the rigging where he could be out of sight.

A surprisingly long time passed before the savages perceived that the *Triton* was sailing fast out to sea. When Mr. Brightman, who was still in the rigging, saw that this discovery had been made and that the natives were in a state of confusion, he shouted "Sail Ho!" in a Kanaka dialect. There was no ship in sight, but the natives did not take the trouble to check up on the cry of alarm. They were terrified at the thought of being caught red-handed in their deeds of violence, and abandoned the *Triton* immediately. Being at that time a considerable distance from the shore, they did not reach home until the following morning.

Mr. Brightman now found himself in command of the *Triton*. In spite of his own painful wounds, he worked strenuously, finding a few foremast hands able to assist him. Mate Wells was in an almost insensible condition, having suffered greatly since his brief but brave part in the affray. He was taken to his cabin and his injuries treated. Mr. Brightman, after the mate and the other wounded men were cared for, turned his attention to working the ship away from the islands. He fully believed that Captain Spencer and his boat's crew had been murdered, since the second party of savages had given such information to the young Kanaka boy. Working the ship was no easy task for Mr. Brightman with his miniature crew. Fortunately, on the following day, he found the second mate and the men who had fled with him. But, even with this increase in the crew, there were only ten able-bodied persons all told.

A few days afterwards, the *Triton* met the ship *Japan* of Nantucket, whose master, Captain Valentine S. Riddell, supplied her with a sextant and watch and advised her officers to sail for the Sandwich Islands. Later, however, Mate Wells changed his mind, and the course was laid to Tahiti, one of the Society group. The *Triton* reached Papeete, the principal port of the island, early in March. Mr. Wells and Mr. Brightman were able to receive, at this belated time, the medical treatment they so much needed.

While the *Triton* was making the passage from Sydenham's Island to Papeete, Captain Spencer and the boat's crew that went ashore with him were living through many agonizing experiences. This account left the captain on the day he was watching the *Triton* sail out of sight. During that day the captain was joined by all of his men who were on the island, and there was some consolation, however small, in being thus together and still alive. In the afternoon, there was great excitement among the natives. They had received some important and disturbing news, and were running to and fro like madmen. Finally it was announced to Captain Spencer that wholesale slaughter had taken place on the *Triton*, that all of the crew had been killed, as well as Manuel and a few of the attacking party, and that Captain Spencer and the men with him were now to suffer a like fate. It all seemed beyond hope; the white men were taken away separately, each strongly guarded by a group of natives.

Captain Spencer was taken to a distant cabin where a trial, if the wild ceremony which took place is worthy of the name, was to determine the mode and time of his death. But, almost at the begin-

ning of the deliberations, an old woman, one who was closely connected to a family of princely rank, rose to his defense. She rushed to him, and, patting him on the breast and on the back, uttered the words of the powerful taboo. Great was the indignation among a certain group of the savages at the act of the old woman. Many still wanted to put the captain to death, and tried to get the taboo removed by all manner of urgings and threats. The woman's will finally prevailed, however, and her success would have placed her by the side of Pocahontas, had Captain Spencer gained a more prominent place in history.

The natives, once the plan of killing the captain had been definitely abandoned, lost all interest in their gathering. Some one remembered that Manuel's worldly possessions were without a lawful owner, now that Manuel was no longer on earth to defend them. The idea came suddenly and spread rapidly. Captain Spencer's judges became violent in their energy to put Manuel's possessions back under a lawful ownership. It was a scene of turmoil and madness, and many were the wounds received. But it gave the captain a breathing spell after the harrowing experience he had just lived through.

While the natives were thus fighting, and Captain Spencer was thinking of his still precarious future, a man from the *Triton*, one of the three who had jumped overboard at the commencement of the melee, was hunting for his captain. This man, a Sandwich Islander, had managed to get ashore without being observed, and had been waiting for a chance to aid his shipmates on the island. He finally found Captain Spencer, who was rather loosely guarded after his death sentence had been reversed, and told some of the details of the massacre. His story, far from complete, however, gave the captain hope that others on the *Triton* had escaped with their lives.

The next morning brought more relief and joy to Captain Spencer. He was allowed to roam at his will over the island, and soon after daybreak he had the pleasure to see every member of the boat's crew which had left the *Triton* with him. Not one of them had been harmed; all had been placed on trial, so to speak, and had not been freed until after lengthy debates. Perhaps the merciful instincts in the savages had prevailed over the more blood-thirsty, but more likely the fear of the white man's revenge had been the decisive factor in the final decision. The death of their prisoners would have done the savages no material good, and might have been the cause of some punishment to be dealt out to them in the future.

Later that morning, another man from the *Triton* appeared before Captain Spencer. This second survivor of the massacre, like the first, had been in the group that had jumped overboard when the fury of Manuel's henchmen was unloosed. He was a native of Ocean Island, a member of the same group to which Sydenham's Island belonged. He could therefore converse freely with the natives of Sydenham's, and was of great use to Captain Spencer as an interpreter.

The group of the *Triton*'s men now on the island was not subjected to any indignities; it was left scornfully to itself. The men suffered from nothing except hunger. No food was offered them by the chiefs, and they had to depend on occasional gifts from the more tender-hearted of the natives. The Ocean Island man was able to make a few friends and he used these friends as much as he could to secure food for his captain and shipmates. This Kanaka, too, spread the story that the *Triton* had sailed off to seek a man-of-war, which would soon come to Sydenham's on its errand of dreadful vengeance. Should Captain Spencer and his men be well treated and allowed to leave the island as soon as a ship hove in sight, the captain would intercede for the natives of Sydenham's and would also reward them with presents of tobacco and cloth.

Many attempts were made to reach ships passing in sight of the island. Often Captain Spencer and his men would row out to a vessel until all were totally exhausted and the sail lost to sight below the horizon. Once, when they were in a native canoe, they arrived almost within hailing distance of a ship, only to watch it sail away as though to escape from a canoe-load of treacherous savages. But finally, some ten days after the tragic occurrence on board the *Triton*, Captain Spencer met success. He and his men were welcomed on the Ship *Alabama* of Nantucket. Later, they were taken on the Ship *United States* of Nantucket, as the *United States* expected to make port much sooner than was convenient for the *Alabama*.

Ten days afterwards, the *United States* spoke the Ship *Japan*, the same vessel that had met the *Triton* two days after the massacre. From Captain Riddell of the *Japan*, Captain Spencer heard for the first time the whole story of Manuel's attack on the *Triton*; he learned who had been killed and how the ship was finally recaptured from the savages. He heard, too, that the survivors of the tragedy, fully belie-

ving that their captain and his boats crew had been murdered, had seen no need of returning to Sydenham's, but, on Captain Riddell's advice, had laid their course to the Sandwich Islands. As the *Japan* was then bound to the Sandwich Islands, Captain Spencer decided that it would be best to change ships again, and he and his men were accordingly landed in Honolulu on March 15.

Captain Spencer's disappointment was great when he failed to find the *Triton* at Honolulu. Not until after months of anxious waiting did he learn the truth. Every one then connected with the *Triton* had given him up for dead. Another captain, Charles H. Marshall, was given command of the ship at Papeete, and he took her to cruise for a season off the coast of Kamschatka. Thence she sailed back to her home port of New Bedford, arriving on May 31, 1850. Captain Spencer had lost all interest in whaling, after he ceased to worry about the *Triton*, and he lived for the rest of his life in Honolulu.

The experiences of Captain Spencer show us how slowly news travelled back in the 1840's. Scraps of information were picked up hit-or-miss and relayed on. A whaleship always exchanged news when she met another on the high seas; she would hear some rumor on a distant island, and that rumor might make the rounds. In a port of importance all kinds of stories were rife, many based on idle speculation or unreliable information. All such news was undependable, and months would pass before the truth could be sifted out. One of the first reports of the *Triton* tragedy was obtained by the *Ann Alexander* of New Bedford, and this vessel, like the Ship *Japan*, spread far and wide a story that was misleading. The *Ann Alexander* was lying off Woodall's Island, one of the King's Mill Group, on February 17, 1848, and this curious passage is found under that date in a journal kept on board:

"There was one white man came on board with some of the natives and reported the Ship *Triton*, Spencer, New Bedford, with 700 bbls. sperm and taken by the natives at Hendervilles Island and 16 of her crew massacred. It appears to me by what he said that there were some 'Portagues' on the island that were concerned in taking the ship. The Ship *Columbia* was wrecked on said island some time previous and no doubt had some articles on board which the natives fancied, and thinking they could get a like prize was a great inducement to them besides being urged on by the Portuguese beachcombers that

are far beneath the poor natives in principles or in fact anything else. He (the white man) said Capt. S. and his 2nd officer with their boats and ten men went on board the *U. S.* of New York in search of his ship. Capt. S. went on shore after the *Columbia*'s oil, thinking to make a North West near the Equator to shun the cold and fogs on the coast of Kamchatka. The natives while on board of us appeared perfectly harmless, the ladies in particular were very good-natured and loving as you please."

## A SMALLPOX VICTIM

*Being the strange story of the Miantonomi, a ship that went  
to a haven and found destruction there.*





ANY a time, in the history of the sea, a curse seems to fall suddenly upon a vessel, and, not content with inflicting a single blow, pursues her steadily and relentlessly. Such a curse governed the voyage of the ship in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and a similar unseen power seems to have guided the voyage of the whaler *Miantonomi*, hailing in the early 1850's from the port of New Bedford. The *Miantonomi*'s first troubles came to her at Ascension Island, practically at the antipodes of her home harbor, and it was at Ascension, too, that the last tragic echo of her disaster was heard.

The *Miantonomi* was practically a new vessel. She made but one voyage, or rather a part of a voyage, in search of whales. And she was only four years old when disaster overtook her. Her early history can be briefly told. She was built as a bark in North Carolina in 1850, was registered as a merchantman belonging to New York, and was subsequently purchased in 1853 by Swift and Allen, whaling agents of New Bedford. She was among the largest vessels engaged in whaling at the time, being of 427 tons, and "a fine vessel", as a newspaper account of the day put it.

On January 14, 1853 she sailed from New Bedford for the Pacific Ocean under the command of Captain William W. Clement. The log-book of the ship *Miantonomi* (for she was altered from a bark before sailing from New Bedford) is preserved in the New Bedford Public Library. Its first pages record what starts out to be an ordinary whaling voyage with the average amount of luck.

The ship being new and excellently built, and the crew being under good discipline and as contented as could be expected of a whaler's crew, there was every promise that the voyage would have a successful outcome. But in the last part of September, 1854, Captain Clement sailed into one of the harbors of Ascension Island in the South Seas, and, since the *Miantonomi* was the first whaler to visit Ascension during the winter season of 1854-55, her master had no means of knowing that a smallpox epidemic was then raging on the island.

Ascension Island was one of the popular visiting places for the South Sea whalers. There was a small foreign population on the island, and also that transient population found on so many islands in the Pacific in that age, a population composed mostly of runaway and discharged seamen and beachcombers. There was a missionary at Ascension, doing all that he could for the spread of Christianity among the natives and also interesting himself in the development of fruit and vegetable plantations.

Good wood and water were found at Ascension in abundance, and likewise yams and bananas and fowls. Under the direction of the missionary, plantations of pumpkins, melons, lemons and pineapples were being created. Ascension, in fact, was a booming place, and, had it not been for the dangerous epidemic which had wiped out about half of the natives, a very fitting place for a visit by the *Miantonomi*.

On October 6th, the *Miantonomi* left Ascension, having taken on board several boatloads of water and food supplies. About two weeks later the smallpox broke out on the ship. But Captain Clement, thinking that he could check the disease, and that he could cure the men afflicted, continued his voyage.

The sick men did not respond to the captain's treatment, however, and the number of cases increased. The situation was so critical that there was only one course to follow, and Captain Clement decided to make for the nearest harbor. That nearest harbor was at Ascension, and on the 3rd of November the course of the ship was laid back to

the scene of the epidemic. There was not much time to waste; men were dropping from the active list continually, and it seemed as though there would not be enough left to man the ropes. Five days after the course had been changed, the handwriting in the log-book changes; the chief mate had been struck with the disease which had hitherto been confined to the forecastle. The *Miantonomi* was in a serious plight.

On November 14th, the captain, who assumed charge of the log-book when the mate was stricken, writes: "Plenty of rain, thunder and lightning, etc. At 6 A. M. Obed Shearman, a Hope Island Kanaka, died with smallpox. At 8 A. M. we buried him."

And November 15th, "Some time during the night, Jim, a Rarotonga Kanaka, jumped overboard, as we have searched the ship for him and he cannot be found. He has not been seen since half-past 10 P. M. and then he was walking about the deck, crazy with the disease of smallpox."

When the *Miantonomi* finally reached one of the small inlets on the coast of Ascension, thirteen members of her company were off duty, with the dread disease, not counting of course those who had died. It was on November 14th, nearly a month after the smallpox had made its first appearance on board. In the morning Captain Clement went ashore in a boat and at noon returned with a pilot who was to guide the ship into an anchorage.

But shortly after the pilot came on board, the light breezes that had prevailed in the morning died down almost entirely. The *Miantonomi* was caught in a strong current which was fast bearing her in toward a reef. "At 1 P. M.," says the log-book, "we commenced towing with three boats, being all that we could man. The three were poorly manned on account of the sickness. The pilot was in one of the boats, helping tow. The current and swell were setting us toward the reef in spite of the boats and wind. At 2:30 we let go the larboard anchor in five fathoms of water forward and three fathoms aft. In about three minutes the ship commenced striking heavy on the reef. At dark we cut away her spars to ease her. At 10 P. M. she bilged."

Thus, in the gloom of the night, and in the midst of sickness and death, the career of the ship *Miantonomi* came to an end. With approximately a half of her surviving crew laid low, the remainder had work aplenty before them. All night they were busy transporting their sick shipmates to a small island near the reef. Two of the

patients were in such a weakened condition that they had to be left on the wreck. One of them died before morning.

But shortly before the rescue of the sick men was completed the crew of the *Miantonomi* had another disheartening difficulty to meet. The natives of the island gathered like vultures over a dead animal. They put off from shore and boarded the ship, breaking into the cabin and the hold and stealing everything they could lay hands upon. They hopelessly outnumbered the able-bodied men of the *Miantonomi*, and the latter could do nothing to stop the looting. On the other hand, the natives confined their attention to their task of thievery, and allowed the white men to carry on the rescue work more or less unhampered. It was a terrible night, full of despair for Captain Clement and his crew. While the sick men were being lifted from berths, while they were being deposited as gently as possible into the boats, while the boats, tossed by breakers, were conveying their suffering occupants to the shore -- while all this humanitarian work was going on, the natives of Ascension Island were carrying on their pillage.

The following morning the ship's crew returned to their vessel to save what provisions they could. But they found that practically everything in the provision line had been either stolen by the natives or damaged by the water. Captain Clement decided to save all the whaling equipment he could, together with the oil and everything else that might later be turned into money. He writes in the log-book: "We are busy at work at the wreck with what men we could muster. The rest of the crew were not able to work when they ascertained that the things saved were for the benefit of the ship's owners and not of themselves."

On the 21st, another man died of smallpox. Thereafter, for about two weeks, Captain Clement with all the men he could persuade to accompany him, visited the wreck every day that the weather and sea permitted. He made slow progress, for it was killing work for the men who were willing to go with him. They were all half-starved and many times had to be in water with the surf up to their necks.

But the natives and beachcombers were not the only thieves, according to the log-book account. "Since we have been wrecked," writes Captain Clement, "I find some of our men have carried on a regular game of robbery. Several boatloads of property, such as shoes, clothing, cloth, axes, etc., sent from the wreck in charge of the fourth mate, have been opened in his boat and every man for himself."

The steward took the liberty of helping himself to what he thought proper. He is an old sea-dog, and something of a lawyer. The men benefit by his advice."

The captain and the men that remained faithful to him tried to cut down through the decks of the *Miantonomi* to get at the oil. For three days they worked at this task, and their endeavor went for naught, for, before they could begin to remove the oil, the wreck was rolled over on her beam-ends. Afterwards, however, a large hole was cut in the bottom of the ship, and ten casks of oil were saved. "If we could have had a gang of men these last two days," writes the captain on December 8th, "we could have had all the oil saved that was left. But with the exception of Mr. Gifford, the cooper, Jim Grace and the two Portuguese boys, the crew would do nothing."

On December 17th, it is written: "From the 10th till today, we went to the wreck every day, but could not do anything. Her lower deck-frame lays on top of the casks, and between the top and bottom there is no oil left. The surf is breaking heavy over her during the whole time.

"December 18th. Went to the wreck this morning and found it impossible to save anything more. At low water we set the ship on fire, in hopes that the water, as it rose, would stop the fire, so that, if there was anything left in the hold, we might be able to save it. At high water the fire went out, but it had burnt her below the lower deck-frame. We saved nothing more of any consequence."

Five days later the steamer *Unicorn* arrived at Ascension on her way from Sydney to Hongkong. Captain Clement, some of his officers and some of his crew took passage in her, and made arrangements with the *Unicorn*'s master to take along with them the property that had been salvaged from the wreck. This property, including a hundred barrels of sperm oil, was later sold in Hongkong for \$3500.

Several members of the crew of the *Miantonomi*, utterly demoralized by the troubles that had overtaken the ship and encouraged by the tropical fascination of Ascension, refused to go with Captain Clement. They included most of the mutinous men who had rose against the ship's discipline as soon as the wreck occurred, and they were more or less under control of the steward, the "old sea-dog" mentioned.

In February of the following year, this steward himself met a tragic end, weeks after the timbers of the *Miantonomi* had been broken

to kindling by the breakers on the reef. He was among those left behind when Captain Clement sailed away in the Unicorn, and soon acquired a very unsavory reputation among the people of the island. There had been quarrels and threats of killing publicly made on his account, and finally he was murdered at the instigation of one of the foreign residents.

## WHALEMEN'S LUCK IN THE CIVIL WAR

*Which tells how the Golconda's master watched his ship  
burn up and how he mourned over a keg of sugared bananas.*





THE whaling industry of New England saw the handwriting on the wall during the Civil War. Petroleum had been discovered, and the ship merchants and captains knew what the consequences were to be. They realized that the decline in their business was permanent, and that, as the years came on, more and more of their craft would be forced out of the running. It was merely a coincidence that the war and the mineral oil discovery should be contemporary events, but the war had a part of its own to play in the decay of the industry—a dramatic part, in fact, which made the port of New Bedford shudder for its future far more than did the news about petroleum.

In the early part of the war, New Bedford saw twenty-three of its finest whaleships sail away in the two "Stone Fleets," which went forth to be sunk at the mouths of Confederate harbors for blockading purposes. Here, indeed, was a great blow to the present industry, for the money paid by the government for the vessels was far from equalling the revenue in oil that those ships had been bringing home.

Far more disastrous than this loss, however, was the depredation done by Confederate cruisers, such as the *Florida*, the *Shenandoah*,

and the *Alabama*, during the war. The memory of the "Stone Fleets" was still warm when the news came that the enemy ships were active in the waters frequented by whalers, and that whaling vessels were being captured right and left and burned with their cargoes. These privateers, most of them equipped in England, sunk forty-six vessels, twenty-five of which hailed from New Bedford. The loss was staggering. It is estimated that the total damage done by the "rebel pirates" (as the cruisers were dubbed at the time) amounted to \$1,650,000. Of this sum, \$500,000 was the value of the oil lost.

Among the many helpless victims of this high seas campaign was the bark *Golconda*, of New Bedford, which sailed from her home port on a voyage to the Pacific in the latter part of 1859. Nearly five years later, just as she was passing through the Gulf Stream on her homeward way, she sailed into the path of the cruiser *Florida*. At the time of the capture her cruise was nominally over; her try-works had been thrown overboard only the day before, and the throwing overboard of the try-works meant that whales were no longer to be sought. The loss of the *Golconda* is described in a journal of her master, Captain Benjamin Winslow, which is preserved at the Old Dartmouth Historical Society's museum at New Bedford. Its interesting passages are quoted here.

"Friday, July 8th, 1864. These twenty-four hours commence with moderate winds from the south, with pleasant weather. Steered N. N. W. At 7 P. M., we struck the southern edge of the Gulf Stream. Middle part, strong breezes from W. S. W. Steered N. W. by N. At 3 A. M. we were through the Gulf Stream and on its northern edge. Steered N. by W. half W. At 4 A. M. we discovered a sail astern steering to the eastward on the wind. It soon kept off and steered for us with sail and steam. At 8 A. M. it came up with us and fired a lee gun, shotted. I then gave orders to haul in studding sail, and we hauled aback. The vessel proved to be the Privateer Confederate steamer *Florida*. The sailing master came on board and allowed me a few minutes to pack up my clothing, and then sent me on board the *Florida*. They took all of my nautical instruments from me. Latitude when taken was about  $37^{\circ} 30'$  north; longitude, about  $72^{\circ} 00'$  west.

"They took about three or four barrels of sperm oil from the ship and then set her on fire in three places: cabin, main hatchway and forecastle. Then they left her. The officer in charge of the

men had no control over them. They commenced plundering and tearing things to pieces as soon as they came on board. They allowed us to take a chest or trunk of clothing and bedding with us. They took from me (my private property) my sextant, aneroid barometer, Colt's pistol, sea chest and a keg of dried bananas, packed in sugar, that I had kept for my wife. They would not give up any of the things to me again.

"At 10 A. M., the *Florida* spoke a French bark, bound direct to New York, and tried to send us in, but the French captain would not take us on account of his vessel's being consigned to the French consul in New York. They let me mess with the officers in the wardroom, and made up my bed in the dining-room to sleep on, and treated me very kindly. The officers and boatsteerers messed by themselves on deck alongside of the smokepipes, on salt meat and hard bread. The men messed forward by themselves.

"Saturday, July 9th. On board the Privateer *Florida*. First and middle parts, steered west by south, with brisk breezes from the north and eastward, and pleasant weather. At 4 A. M., discovered two sails (schooners). Steered for a large schooner and came up with her. She proved to be the *Margaret Y. Davis*, Capt. William T. West, of New York, six days from Port Royal, bound to New York, and (they) burned her at 5:30 A. M. Then we steered for another schooner, which proved to be the *William H. Clearer*, Capt. John R. Hall, of Harbour Island (English), bound to Harbour Island. We sent a boat on board and it soon returned again to the steamer. They gave orders to me to tell my two mates and one boatsteerer to get ready to go on board of the schooner, and likewise, Captain West and his mate. So at 8.30 A. M. we six went on board of the schooner, *William H. Clearer*, and steered south by west for Harbour Island.

"The captain of the *Florida*'s name was Morris, a tall slim man, with very sharp features. The first lieutenant's name was Porter. The pirate steamer *Florida* was bark rigged with a flying mainsail and fore-and-aft sails, jib and flying jib, two smoke-pipes painted white. Her length of keel was 185 feet, with 26-foot beam. She draws twelve feet of water and mounts six 64-pounders and two 131-pounders, all rifle bore. The number of her crew is 130 men all told. Her after guard are all Southerners, and the men forward are composed of all nations—a dirty, miserable set of beings.

"Sunday, July 10th. On board of the schooner *William H. Clearer* of Harbour Island, one of the Bahamas. At 5:30 P. M., we spoke an English schooner from Harbour Island, bound for New York. The schooner would have taken us on board, provided we could get there, but the schooner *Clearer's* boat was very poor, and it being very rough we could not go. Middle part, strong breezes. At 6 A. M., we spoke an English hermaphrodite brig bound for Europe, and nothing more."

The record now "sleeps" for a while; that is, nothing of interest is written in the journal. The schooner *Clearer* has an ordinary passage to the Bahamas, and arrives there on the 19th.

"Tuesday, July 19th. At 2:40 P. M., the schooner was in about two miles of the land. Tacked and stood off with a light breeze from the S. E. to go around the east end of Harbour Island. At 4 P. M., light winds from the S. E. At 6 P. M., strong breezes from S. E. At 7 P. M., went through the east passage into the harbor, and at 7:30 P. M. came to anchor abreast of the town. I went on shore to see if there was a United States consul on the island, but found none. At 11 A. M., Captain West of the *Margaret Davis* and his mate, and the first mate, second mate, boatsteerer and myself, all of the bark *Golconda's* crew, took passage in the sloop *John Westley*, of eight tons burthen, for Nassau.

"Wednesday, July 20th. We arrived at Nassau at 11 P. M., but did not go on shore. At 5 A. M., Captain West and myself went on board of the hermaphrodite brig *Olive Frances*, of Machias, State of Maine. The brig was discharging ice, and Captain Small offered us every hospitality and to make our homes (Captain West and myself) with him as long as we remained at Nassau. We accepted. He gave us money to pay for our men's breakfast on shore, providing the consul would not provide for them, which money they had to use for that purpose, \$2.50. At 9:30 A. M., we went to see the American consul and to claim his protection. The consul would not provide board and lodging for the officers and the boatsteerer on shore, but ordered them to go on board the ice vessel (the *Olive Frances*) to board and lodge, and to take a passage home. The captain on the ice vessel could not accommodate them, being at the time discharging cargo and all lumbered up, with his crew and several hired men besides to cook for, and only one cook to do the work. He was under charter to go to another island to take in a cargo of salt. It was impossible for him to take the

men. If it had not been for Captain Small, the officers would have had to have gone without their breakfast.

"Thursday, July 21st. At 3 P. M., Captain Small, of the brig *Olive Frances*, and ourselves went to see the American consul to make some arrangements to provide for the men. After a long talk he told us captains to find a boarding-house for the men, and in the morning he would give us an order to take to the boarding-house to show that he would be responsible for their board. We found a boarding-house for the men for the night, but had to be responsible for their board, providing the consul would not pay.

"At 10 A. M., we went to see the consul again. He wanted the men to sign blank vouchers, which was not lawful. I told the consul that it was not lawful, and also told the men not to sign them. After talking about two hours, the men were compelled to sign them in order to get a boarding-house. The consul agreed to pay their board at one dollar per day, but after the officers had signed the blank vouchers, he would not allow but 87½ cents per day for their board and lodging.

"Friday, July 22nd, 1864. At Nassau, Bahama Isles. We are stopping on board of the ice vessel *Olive Frances*, of Maine; the officers are boarding on shore. There has been quite a number of deaths by the yellow fever of late in this place. Twelve died yesterday of the scarlet fever. This day Captain Darius Clark of the schooner *Twilight*, of New York, called to see me, and let me have \$30 in American gold to pay my expenses home, and I am to pay the same amount in American gold to Israel Nickerson, of North Rochester, Mass.

"At 8 P. M., Captain Clark, Mr Percival (a passenger on board of Captain Clark's vessel), Captain West and myself went to Captain Falkner's house and spent the evening.

"At 6 A. M., Captain Clark sent a boat to the ice vessel, and Captain Small and myself went back in the boat to the schooner *Twilight*, and spent a couple of hours on board. Captain Clark gave me two bottles of rum to drink with water to prevent taking the yellow fever. At 11 A. M., went to see the American consul to try to get a passage to New York in the English steamer *Governor Bayley*, of Nassau. The consul refused to do it at first, but finally concluded to allow us ten dollars each towards paying our passage to New York, and the rest to pay ourselves. As we could do no better with him, we accepted it and left the office.

From there, went to see Mr. Jackson, agent of merchant ship underwriters, and there was introduced to Mr. Kilpatrick, of New York, I think, the new consul just arrived to take the old consul's place.

"Sunday, July 24th. At 2:30 P. M., Captain West and myself took our leave of Captain Small of the hermaphrodite brig, the ice vessel. We went on board of the steamer *Governor Bayley*, for New York, as cabin passengers. Four other men went on board to work their passage to New York. We left Nassau for New York at 4:40 P. M.

"Captain Small of the ice vessel is certainly one of the finest men that I ever have seen. He did everything for us that a man could do. He offered to give us money to take us home with, which I would not accept. He let me have four dollars, half of which I gave to the officers to get their breakfasts with. I wanted to pay him again, but he would not take it. The third vessel that the *Florida* burned after she was first fitted out was a large hermaphrodite brig, a vessel which Captain Small sailed on shares. One quarter of this vessel belonged to him, and was not insured. She was burned at one of the West Indian Isles, in Spanish waters, about one mile from the land.

"The owners, or a part of the owners of the *Governor Bayley*, are Americans belonging to New York and the State of Maine. Mr. Darling, of New York, now living at Nassau, is the agent."

Captain Winslow's homeward journey, back over the path that his ill-starred *Golconda* was following on her final passage, was without special interest. Fair winds made his return speedy, and fine weather brought him some cheer. The troubles that he went through from the time he first sighted the *Florida* down to his last argument with the consul at Nassau were typical of many another New Bedford captain whose vessel was so unfortunate as to meet a "rebel pirate."

There is at least one logical reason in back of the adoption of the name "rebel pirate," for it was the practice of some of the privateers to resort to cold-blooded trickery in making their captures of defenceless vessels. One trick which would have been worthy of the old buccaneers of the Spanish main consisted in setting fire to a captured whaleship at night. The skies would be illuminated by the flames, of course, and neighboring ships that caught sight of the glow would be drawn thither. In this manner the cruiser

*Alabama* captured no less than nine vessels which were attracted by the burning of the *Ocean Rover*, of Mattapoisett, and which hastened to the scene to save the lives they believed to be imperilled.

We have a fine description of the master of the *Alabama*, Captain Semmes, from a New Bedford captain who commanded one of her victims. This New Bedford captain, Shadrach R. Tilton, tells of Captain Semmes wearing a heavy black mustache, which he had waxed by a servant every morning, and of his doing everything in white kid gloves. Captain Tilton thus describes the capture of this vessel, the bark *Virginia*, by the *Alabama*:

"The pirate ship overtook us in latitude  $39^{\circ} 10'$ ; longitude  $34^{\circ} 20'$ . She first showed British colors, but when a quarter of a mile from the *Virginia*, she set Confederate colors and sent an armed boat's crew aboard. I was informed the vessel was a prize to the *Alabama*, and ordered to take my papers and go aboard the steamer. The pirates then stripped the ship of all valuable articles, and at 4 P. M. set fire to her. I went on the quarterdeck of the *Alabama* with my son, when they sent us into the lee waist with the crew. All were ironed except two boys, the cook and the steward. I asked if I was to be ironed, and the reply was that the vessel's purser had been in irons aboard the United States vessel, and his head shaved. He proposed to retaliate. We were put in the lee waist with an old mattress and a few blankets upon which to lie. The steamer's guns were run out the side and the ports could not be shut. So when the sea was rough and the vessel rolled, the water washed the decks and we were wet all the time. Often we would wake at night with a sea pouring over us. Our food consisted of beef, pork, rice, ham, tea, coffee, and bread. Only one of our irons was taken off at a time. We were always under guard. On October 3rd we fell in with the schooner *Emily Farnham*, to which we were transferred, after signing a parole."

Though the captains of the unfortunate whaleships captured by the Confederate privateers seldom made any resistance, yet there was one exceptional instance in which splendid courage was shown. The resistance of Captain Thomas G. Young of the bark *Favorite*, of Fairhaven, was as futile as it was bold, for his ship, like all the other whaling vessels, was unarmed and unprotected. But it was just this hopelessness in the struggle that made his act resemble a tale of ancient Greece or Rome.

Captain Young was in Behring's Straits when the cruiser *Shenandoah* came into those waters, and on the 26th of June, 1865, captured and burned five ships and barks. On the following day the stage was all set for an even greater destruction, for, in a neighboring part of the Straits, a sizeable fleet of whalers lay huddled together at anchor. These ships had come to the rescue of the ship *Brunswick*, of New Bedford, and had the *Shenandoah* been commanded by the wildest of captains, he could not have chosen a more favorable situation for a destructive attack. Even the wind had died down, and there was no escape from a vessel under steam.

The fleet yielded gracefully to the *Shenandoah*, all except Captain Young's vessel, the *Favorite*. When the boat from the privateer came alongside the whaler, its officer looked into the muzzles of loaded bomb-guns and firearms, and saw, on the deck, the aged figure of the whaling captain, ordering him to stand off. This show of resistance was unprecedented; it came as a surprise, so much so that the boat did "stand off" and returned to the *Shenandoah*.

A second boat was now sent to capture the *Favorite*. This time it succeeded, for Captain Young had been deserted by his crew and was defending his vessel alone. The men of the *Favorite* had realized the folly of resistance, and, not wishing to lose their lives for the sake of a principle, however worthy, had taken to their boats. Before leaving the *Favorite* they had removed all ammunition from the ship, taking even the caps out of the loaded guns. They had warmly urged their captain to come with them, but he refused, reiterating that he would willingly die if he could but kill Captain Waddell, the commander of the *Shenandoah*. And so, when the second boat from the privateer ordered Captain Young to surrender, and when the latter pulled the trigger of a gun against his captors and discovered that the cap had been removed, he saw that his cause was lost. There was nothing for him to do but yield. His bravery can hardly have been appreciated by his captors, for he was put into irons in the forecastle of the *Shenandoah*, and relieved of his money, watch and other valuables. Eight other whalers shared the fate of the *Favorite* the day they went to the rescue of their ice-jammed fellow.

The *Shenandoah* was busy in that month of June, cruising through the northernmost part of the Pacific and up into the Arctic.

Her descents upon the fleets of the whalemen were numerous. Her record of captures would have even been greater, had it not been for Captain Nye of the ship *Abigail*, of New Bedford, who, when he saw that his own vessel could not escape from the privateer, manned two of his boats and went off to warn other members of the fleet of the danger. As it was, the *Shenandoah*'s record is imposing. She burned thirty-four ships and barks that she had captured, and four others were used by her for carrying captured crews back to the mainland.

The great loss entailed by whaling ports during the Civil War is evident. Ship-owners did not dare to invest in new voyages in the face of such imminent perils.

Even taking into consideration all these losses, the damage to the whaling industry done by the *Alabama*, the *Florida* and the *Shenandoah* far from equalled the damage done by the discovery of petroleum. Many a ship, had it not been burned on the high seas, "in the harness" as it were, would have rotted out an inglorious old age by the side of some moss-covered wharf.



## THE LOSS OF THE ESSEX

*Which tells how the hunted whipped the hunter and how a handful of Nantucketers became cannibals.*





NANTUCKET, by 1821, had become used to hardships. The little island community had seen her sole business twice wiped out, once during the Revolution and once during the War of 1812. But, after both of these trying periods, her courage was still youthful, and she zealously went about the task of reorganizing her whaling fleet. In the early twenties she still held the leadership in the industry. Nantucket was used to hardships, indeed, and she had become philosophical about the perils of whaling, and about her sons who sailed never to return. Nevertheless, when the news of the *Essex* tragedy reached Nantucket, the shock was great. A whale ramming

a ship and sending her to the bottom seemed an impossible occurrence —an event of which no normal man would ever dream.

Impossible, yet the tiny handful of survivors were there in Nantucket. The townsfolk could see their haggard faces, and could read in their eyes the tale of horror. They were the eyes of men who had been through the worst tortures one could conceive, of men who had suffered extreme hunger and thirst, who had seen madness and death at close hand, who had even eaten the flesh of their comrades.

Nantucket was a right-little-tight-little community in the 1820's. Every person in the town shared in the others' fortunes; every one had an interest in the whale fishery. Thus the tragedy of the *Essex* affected all nearly equally. It was not what happened to the *Essex* alone which stunned. It was the possibility of the same thing happening again, and of the same thing having happened before. Loved ones of the men who sailed never to return had heretofore simply mourned over their loss. Now their grief was to be intensified by all sorts of imaginings about what the lost ones must have suffered. A ship that never returns is a sorrowful thing to contemplate; but to contemplate the possibilities of the disaster is agonizing. The survivors of the *Essex* were living reminders of these possibilities. And the power and fury of a whale which sunk a ship and caused such human agony seemed almost supernatural.

The ship *Essex* was in the mid-Pacific in the Fall of 1820, cruising for whales on some popular whaling grounds near the Equator. She had sailed from Nantucket, with a crew of twenty hardy men, in August of the previous year, and her fate was entrusted to George Pollard, Jr., a captain of good average ability. Her voyage, however, was not going successfully. She had rounded the Horn, had cruised the waters off the west coast of South America and about the Galapagos Islands, but had not secured a single whale. So it was with great enthusiasm that the men on the *Essex* sighted whales and lowered in pursuit of them on the morning of August 12, 1820, a bright, clear morning, with everything favorable for a successful hunt.

Three boats were lowered to chase the whales. One was headed by the captain, one by the chief mate, Owen Chase, and the other by the second mate, Matthew P. Joy. All were in high spirits, and were rejoicing over their chance of killing their first whale. The mate's boat had the first opportunity to strike; the harpoon took,

but the whale, in lashing about, managed to deliver the boat a heavy blow with his tail. The blow did considerable damage, and the mate was forced to cut the line and pay his undivided attention to saving his boat and men.

The accident to the mate's boat was nothing unusual. Whalers were used to stove boats, and knew how to meet such emergencies. By stuffing their jackets into the damaged part of the boat, Mr. Chase's men were able to row back to the *Essex* with safety. But in spite of the mate's being temporarily put out of the hunt, events were proceeding rather favorably. The captain's and the second mate's boats had fastened to another whale, and Mr. Chase followed them with the ship. Meanwhile, repairs were being made to the stove boat, as the mate expected to take part in the hunt again.

While the repairs were in progress, Mr. Chase's attention was called to a large sperm whale lying some twenty rods from the ship. It was a large whale and doubtlessly experienced in encounters with the devices of human beings. Mr. Chase, in his story of *Essex* tragedy recounted several years later, estimated this whale to be about eighty-five feet long, and, if his estimate was correct, one of the very largest sperm whales ever observed. In any case, he was bold and ugly, and of sufficient intelligence to take the initiative.

Mr. Chase watched the whale. He saw him spout a few times and then sink below the surface of the water. But, instead of remaining out of sight for the usual length of time, the whale almost immediately rose to the surface again, about a ship's length off. He came toward the ship at the rate of about three miles an hour; suddenly, tripling his speed, he dashed toward the vessel and struck her with his head just forward of the fore-chains. With such rapidity did he come that the boy at the helm did not have time to put it hard up after the mate had hastily ordered him to do so. The blow was of extreme violence. The men on deck were thrown off their feet, and the *Essex* brought up and trembled like a leaf.

The members of the crew were paralyzed with consternation. They were totally unprepared for such an attack, for never before in the history of whaling had a whale attempted to ram a ship. The whale passed underneath the *Essex*, scraping her keel, and rose to the surface again off to leeward, where he lay quietly for a moment, stunned and surprised, probably, at the resistance afforded by the ship. Mr. Chase, as soon as he recovered his self-command, saw that the ship was slowly settling. He ordered the men to start the

pumps, and he set signals at the mast-head for the return of the boats that were out on the chase.

The whale was returning. Either in pain or in anger, he was thrashing about convulsively, swishing his great tail and snapping his jaws. Mr. Chase, though keeping his eye on the animal, hardly thought of his returning to an attack, and began to make preparations for the launching of the boats to be ready for any emergency. Suddenly the cry of a man by the fore-hatchway aroused every one from his work. The whale was coming at a greatly increased speed directly for the ship's bows; his tail, swishing rapidly back and forth, made a path of foam a rod or more in width. Orders were shouted for the helm to be put hard up. But it was too late. The *Essex* was somewhat waterlogged, and did not respond to the helmsman. The blow came, and the ship's bows were completely crushed in just below the cat-head. Again the whale scraped under the keel of the ship, and passed off to leeward to be seen no more.

The mate had to think and act quickly, as the *Essex* was filling rapidly. His own boat had not yet been repaired; the only other available boat was the spare one. Its lashings were cut, and preparations were finished for her launching. The steward rushed into the cabin, saved two quadrants, two navigators, two compasses and the captain's and the mate's trunks. These were all loaded into the boat. There was no time to save anything else. The boat slipped into the water as the *Essex* fell over on her beams ends.

The two boats which had been out chasing their whale now arrived at the *Essex*, and Captain Pollard took command of the situation. The masts of the ship were cut away, and she righted a little. Holes were chopped through the deck over the places where the food and water were stored. There was no need of feverish haste, as the *Essex* showed no signs of sinking at once. The boats were moored to the wreck, and for three days the crew worked preparing the boats for the long journey ahead. About six hundred pounds of dry bread and about sixty-five gallons of water, were divided among the three boats. Some live tortoises from the Galapagos Islands were taken from the hold, as well as a musket and some powder, some nails, files and other like implements. The boats were also equipped with washboards, raising the gunwales about six inches, for they were heavily loaded, and rough weather would have been sure to swamp them in their original condition.

On the twenty-second of the month, a final consultation was held at the wreck. An observation taken that day showed the position to be 0:30 degrees north latitude and 120 degrees west longitude. The nearest land was the Marquesas Islands, some twelve hundred miles away, while the coast of Ecuador, in the opposite direction, was nearer two thousand miles. One of these passages had to be attempted, and there was little likelihood of meeting a vessel, as the *Essex* disaster occurred before the Pacific was much travelled by whalers and merchantmen. Between the Marquesas Islands and the coast of South America, the men of the *Essex* chose the latter for their destination. It was farther than the Marquesas, to be sure, but at that time the island groups of the South Seas were little known. Cannibals were feared far more than hundreds of miles added to a journey.

An emergency agreement was entered into by the wrecked crew. The boats were to stay within sight of one another, as closely as weather conditions would permit. Six men were allotted to the chief mate's boat, seven to the captain's, and seven to the second mate's. Each person was to be allowed a half a pint of water and one ship's biscuit each day.

The long, tragic journey now started, and the *Essex* was left floating behind, a battered derelict. Bitter experiences came almost from the start. Four days had not passed before the mate's boat, known to be the weakest of the three, began leaking badly. The other boats stood by to aid her while some rough repairs were made. When the journey was resumed, the boat was still leaking somewhat, and it required a man bailing almost continuously to keep her free from water. A day or so later a fish of some unknown species struck the captain's boat and did so much damage that she, in her turn, had to be lightered for repairs.

This accident to the captain's boat was the cause of the men's first genuine suffering -- the agony of thirst. For, when the fish smashed into the boat, a quantity of sea water had washed in and had soaked the ship-bread. The men had to eat this salty bread, of course, and thirst of the hopeless, maddening kind, resulted. There was fresh water still to be had, but the rule of half a pint a day had to be followed. Hundreds of miles of journeying was still ahead. The desire for fresh meat was strong. A Galapagos tortoise rescued from the wreck of the *Essex*, was killed and eaten raw. Some flying fish, accidentally hitting the sails or dropping into the boats, were pounced upon, and devoured by the men, bones, scales and all. Hunger and

thirst could not be appeased ; sportive dolphins, frisking happily about the boats drove this little band of humans to a near-frenzy. The weather was hot ; it was the summertime of the south latitudes. Rough weather lasted, and occasionally the boats were separated.

On December 16th, when the boats had been on their passage for twenty-six days, the daily rations were cut in half. Only a quarter of a pint of water and a half a ship's biscuit were allowed each man. The thirst became more and more excruciating. Some one suggested that bathing be tried, as the body might absorb some of the sea water and allay that great craving for liquid. Any idea, however ridiculous it might sound, was worth at least a trial. So bathing was tried, and though no relief from thirst came, yet the men in plunging about by the boats, discovered barnacles on the keels, and these barnacles were torn off and eaten. Mere barnacles, so often berated as nuisances by seamen, gave these destitute, suffering men a brief thrill of pleasure.

But on the 20th of December there was a far greater thrill. "Land Ho!" was the cheering cry, and at last, after nearly a month of sailing and drifting, the wrecked crew of the *Essex* had their feet on dry land.

What an anticlimax came, however, when the men looked over the land and saw what a cruel trick Fate had played upon them! Mr. Chase took an observation ; he found he was on Ducie's Island, an advanced outpost of the South Sea archipelago, and almost due south from the place where the *Essex* had been abandoned. Storms had driven them far from their course, and the coast of South America was more distant now than when they had commenced their journey. Moreover, what seemed even worse at the time, Ducie's Island was but a barren piece of waste-land. It bore no food worth mentioning ; a few birds and fish were caught, and some bird's nests rifled of their eggs. Several days were spent in the quest for fresh water, and finally a tiny spring was found at the ocean's edge, a spring that was visible only at extreme low tides.

It was almost certain death to remain long on the inhospitable island, which was far from the haunts of ships. And so the tiny fleet set sail again, with the island of Juan Fernandez, Robinson Crusoe's island, as their destination. Three men refused to go farther ; they preferred taking their chances on living on the island till rescue should come rather than living through long weeks of agony in the boats.

During the second week of January, 1821, about two weeks after the boats had left Dusky's Island, the first death occurred, that of the second mate, Matthew Joy. Two days later a severe storm separated the boats, and they were never to be reunited. The boats of the captain and of the late second mate were together for a while longer, but Mr. Chase's boat was now entirely alone. We shall follow the fortunes of the latter, basing our recital on the story Mr. Chase afterwards told.

A new despair now seized the five men who were left to the chief mate's boat. Hunger and thirst were excessive; the men's voices assumed a strange tone, and lunacy gave signs of its approach. Hope was diminishing rapidly, and the men were trying to reconcile themselves to death. One day a large shark attacked the boat. It did no damage, but pursued the craft till near nightfall. But this event, trivial in itself, preyed upon the minds of the men. In their condition their superstitions waxed strong; they seemed to see something inexplicable, something supernatural, in this pursuit by a shark. And the next day one of the number, a colored man, turned into a raving maniac and in a few hours died.

Only a few days passed before another man breathed his last in a mad convulsion. And the frightful decision was made that his body should serve as food for his surviving ship-mates. It was a decision made as cool-headedly as possible under the torturing circumstances. The food was practically gone; all realized that death by starvation was near at hand. So the dead man was dismembered, and the parts of his body not saved for food were wrapped religiously in a piece of canvas and given a seaman's burial. The flesh saved was cooked so that it might last as long as possible. Cannibalism — there was great woe in the hearts of the *Essex* survivors.

On the 15th of February, about a week after the last death, the supply of human flesh was exhausted, and only two cakes of bread were left. Mr. Chase and his companions realized that soon one of themselves must be sacrificed for the others. Their limbs were swollen and caused them great pain. On the 17th, the lad who was once the cabin-boy of the *Essex*, lost his last bit of courage, and, in spite of Mr. Chase's entreaties, he lay down in the bottom of the boat, simply waiting for death.

But in the morning of the next day, the great release came. At seven o'clock, a sail was sighted. Fortunately it drew near, an English vessel, the brig *Indian*, Capt. William Crozier, of London.

The cabin-boy's life was spared, along with Mr. Chase's and one other's. And on the 25th of February the three were safe in Valparaiso.

What joy was theirs! Dry land and civilization and friends once more! Comfort and peace of mind after three months of agony! There were Yankee whalers, Nantucketers, to be seen and talked with in Valparaiso, for that city was even at that early date a port of call for the Pacific whaleships. Chase's only worry was over the fate of the two boatloads of his ship-mates, from whom he had become separated shortly after the departure from Dusie's Island.

Two weeks elapsed, and then a familiar sail came into the harbor of Valparaiso. It was the ship *Dauphin* of Nantucket, Zimri Coffin master. To Chase it meant at first the renewal of friendships and fresh news from home. But it was due to mean a great deal more. For on the *Dauphin* was Captain Pollard, who had been rescued practically at the end of his endurance and amid horrors worse than those that had overwhelmed Chase and his companions. Charles Ramsdelle was the only man rescued along with Captain Pollard. The reunion that these men held was worthy of an epic. Their tears and hand-clasps were moving; impatiently they exchanged their stories.

After Captain Pollard had been separated from his chief mate on the high seas, his boat had remained for some time in company with the boat of the late second mate. Their food became totally exhausted, and, like Chase and his men, they had to resort to cannibalism. The death of two men, one in the captain's and one in the other boat, provided them with food. And then a storm came up which separated the boats for good. The men who had once been with the second mate were never heard from thereafter.

The condition of the men in Captain Pollard's boat grew worse day by day. In the last of January came the death of another man, a colored man. Practically all the deaths among the crew of the *Essex* were of colored men; somehow they had not the constitution to live on short rations as had the whites. His body was eaten by the survivors, who now numbered only four. Days passed, and the realization came to all that some one must be killed that the others might live. Lots were drawn, and Owen Coffin, a cousin of the captain, received the death warrant. It was a tragic, heroic day for the small band of men. Captain Pollard, recognizing his responsibility as leader, which was increased by close relationship in the case of Coffin, wished to sa-

crifice himself in his young cousin's place. But Coffin insisted on the verdict of the lottery, and bravely resigned himself to death. Another drawing of lots placed on Charles Ramsdelle the duty of executioner, and Coffin was killed with the captain's pistol. The survivors dreaded a repetition of this mode of execution, but on February 11th, another natural death occurred, leaving Captain Pollard and Ramsdelle alone. On February 23rd, the ship *Dauphin* rescued them off the Island of St. Mary's.

What of the three men who remained at Ducie's Island? Fortunately, Captain Pollard found in Valparaiso an English ship that was leaving on a passage to Australia. Her captain agreed to stop at Ducie's Island, and he did so, finding the men barely alive. The tiny spring they had found had long since dried up. They had been drinking rain water and bird's blood, and their food had been almost nothing. The English ship took them to Sydney, and thence to London, and eventually they found their way home.

So ends the sad story of the *Essex*, and of her eight survivors out of a crew of twenty. Captain Pollard afterwards had command of another Nantucket vessel, the ship *Two Brothers*, but this vessel was lost on a reef to the westward of the Sandwich Islands. He never sailed again. He felt that somehow the sea was against him, and the memory of his experiences after the loss of the *Essex* remained as a nightmare. He never was known to refer to those experiences. After quitting the sea, he became a night policeman in Nantucket, and lived to the age of eighty-one. Owen Chase, however, lived down the horrors he had been through. He became a very fortunate whaling captain, and was known for his successful voyages made in the *Charles Carroll*, a ship that was built for him at Nantucket.



## THE LOSS OF THE ANN ALEXANDER

*Being the story of another whale that learned  
his lesson from Moby Dick.*





THE career of the ship *Ann Alexander* of New Bedford was an unusually varied and interesting one. But, as we are concerned at present simply with the story of her destruction, the account of the early part of her half-century's existence may be passed over briefly. The first record we have of her gives the *Ann Alexander* the title of merchantman under the management of George Howland of New Bedford. Howland was managing her mercantile voyages during the early years of the 1800's.

In 1805, when making a voyage from New York to Leghorn under the command of Captain Loum Snow, she fell in with the victorious British Fleet immediately after the Battle of Trafalgar. She was therefore probably the first outside vessel to hear of the outcome of the engagement. The British at the time were making repairs to their battleships, and Lord Collingswood, who assumed command at the death of Lord Nelson, demanded some lumber which the *Ann Alexander* was carrying as part of her cargo. The lumber was the personal property of Captain Snow, and he was paid for it in English gold. On the following day, after the *Ann Alexander* had left the British, she came up with the new seventy-four gun frigate *United States*. Thus American officialdom, if we consider the frigate as its representative, received its first news of Trafalgar from a humble New Bedford merchantman.

In January, 1807, on a voyage from St. Ives, England, to Leghorn, the *Ann Alexander* was captured by a Spanish privateer, and,

under a prize crew, ordered to Spain. The next day a British privateer recaptured her, Napoleonic Spain being at war with Great Britain at the time. A British prize crew now replaced the Spanish, and the *Ann Alexander* was sent on her way to Gibraltar. Once again the tables turned, and she was captured by the Spaniards and taken to Algiers. But Captain Snow had entered the British prize crew as his own crew prior to this last capture, and, after reaching Algiers, he was released by the authorities and allowed to proceed on his voyage to Leghorn.

In 1820, the *Ann Alexander* ceased to be a merchantman and was enrolled in New Bedford's growing whaling fleet. She had made fifteen whaling voyages before she sailed from New Bedford for the last time, June 1, 1850, to meet the same fate that had overtaken the *Essex* of Nantucket. Curiously enough, her destruction by a sperm whale occurred in the Pacific, near the Equator, not many hundreds of miles to the east of where the *Essex* was attacked.

The first part of this last voyage was fairly successful. The *Ann Alexander* made a good catch of oil in the Atlantic, had sent 115 barrels home, and then had rounded the Horn to try her luck in the Pacific. On the 20th of August, 1851, she was in five degrees, fifty minutes, south latitude and one hundred two degrees west longitude, or in what was commonly known as the Off-Shore Grounds. These whaling grounds were popular haunts of the Pacific whalers during the forties and fifties, and it was undoubtedly because of this popularity of the place that the crew of the *Ann Alexander*, after the ship's destruction, did not have to go through the sufferings which the men of the *Essex* endured.

At about nine o'clock in the morning of the day above mentioned, whales were sighted, and two boats were lowered in pursuit. One boat, the starboard, was headed by the captain, John S. Deblois, while the other, the larboard, was headed by the chief mate. The latter succeeded in making the first strike. After running some time, the mate's whale suddenly turned on the boat, and almost before the men realized what was about to happen, he rolled on his back, seized the boat in his great jaws and crushed it to splinters. The men, however, all had a chance to jump, and Captain Deblois, arriving at the scene, took them into his boat.

The *Ann Alexander* was about six miles away, but a man at her mast-head had seen what had happened. The waist boat was quickly sent to the scene to give assistance, and, upon its arrival, the men were evenly divided among the two boats. Captain Deblois

decided to attack the vicious whale again, and off the boats started, the mate taking command of the waist boat. The mate was in the lead when they came upon the whale, when the latter repeated his previous performance, made a sudden dash for the waist boat, and crushed it in his jaws. And, by a second miracle, neither the mate nor any one in his charge was hurt. The captain, after rescuing the men of the waist boat, now was forced to give up the chase temporarily, for his boat was heavily overloaded with eighteen men in it. The only course, therefore, was to return to the *Ann Alexander*.

But the whale had not abandoned the conflict. He pursued the boat, and opening his jaws, hurled himself forward as though to destroy a third opponent. The men prepared to jump, but, for some unknown reason, the whale passed by the boat. It was nerve-racking, nevertheless, and the rowers strained themselves to their utmost until they reached the *Ann Alexander* in safety.

Captain Deblois, unwilling to give up his chances for oil, and perhaps desirous of obtaining revenge for the damage done by the whale, determined to try another attack upon the monster. He first sent out a boat to collect the oars and other equipment of the shattered boats, and, when this job was finished, he headed the *Ann Alexander* in the direction of the big whale. As the ship approached him, Captain Deblois decided to make the attack directly from the bow of the vessel. So, as the ship passed by the animal, a lance was thrown, which struck him in the head. The whale appeared infuriated by the blow, and, instead of swimming away from danger, he turned about immediately and made for the ship. The command was given to haul on the wind, and the ship was able to dodge the animal.

The captain now realized he was dealing with no common every-day enemy, but the realization only made him all the more zealous to carry on the fight. He put the *Ann Alexander* in pursuit of the whale again. He himself took his position on the knight-heads, lance in hand, ready to deliver a deadly blow when the right moment should come. But when the ship was within fifty rods of her quarry, the whale settled below the surface of the water and disappeared from sight.

The sun was setting, and Captain Deblois now reluctantly concluded that he must abandon the pursuit. He started to leave the knight-heads, when he suddenly saw the whale rushing at the vessel. He later stated that the whale's velocity must have been about fifteen knots an hour. There was hardly time enough to think. The whale struck the *Ann Alexander* with great violence in a spot about two

feet from the keel and just abreast the foremast. The vessel trembled as though she had struck a rock.

Captain Deblois darted quickly down into the forecastle to see what damage had been done; he found a powerful stream of water rushing in with a roar. Quickly regaining the deck, he gave orders to the mate to cut clear the two anchors and their cables. He feared that the ship would sink immediately, heavily ballasted as she was with pig iron, and thought the abandonment of the anchors and cables would relieve her somewhat. The mate in great haste attempted to follow out the orders, but he succeeded only in clearing away one anchor and cable; the other cable had been fastened around the foremast, and time was pressing, as the ship was sinking rapidly.

Meanwhile the captain had entered the cabin, where he found three feet of water. Snatching a chronometer, a quadrant and a chart, and ascending to deck, he ordered the boats to be cleared. Everything was done in feverish haste. The men picked up everything that came to hand to put into the boats; hardly anything that would really be needed was picked up. The captain tried to enter the cabin again, but was unable to do so. The boats were shoved off, and the captain, who now was alone on board the vessel, jumped into the water and swam to the nearest craft. The crews of the boats rowed away frantically, fearing the suction that would result should the ship settle beneath the surface.

The *Ann Alexander* did not sink, however. She lay on her beam-ends, with her topgallant yards under water. Not until the men had rowed away from the ship and were resting on their oars did they fully realize the extent of their plight. They did not have a single mouthful of food in any of the boats; no one had thought of food in the disorder in which they quit the ship. Of water they had only twelve quarts to be shared among thirty-three men. Moreover, as the best boats had been smashed during the day's whale-hunt, they had been obliged to take to the sea in old, leaky craft. Each boat contained eleven men, nearly twice the number it was built for, besides the miscellaneous supply of odds and ends the men had seized upon in their haste. All night the boat-crews had to bail to keep their craft afloat, as they lay with the *Ann Alexander* near by, hoping that in the morning they might be able to return to the wreck to secure water and provisions. All of them knew the sad tale of the *Essex*, and all were filled with great dread over the possibility of living through similar tortures.

At day-light, the *Ann Alexander* was still afloat, yet no one except the captain dared to board her. It was necessary to cut away her masts in order to right the vessel, but the men feared that this operation would sink her. In spite of the fact that the ship afforded them their only hope of getting provisions, they did not want to take the risk of drowning. Captain Deblois, however, went to the wreck, and with a hatchet cut away the masts. The ship righted herself, and, as there apparently was no danger of her sinking immediately, the boats drew up. With whaling-spades, the men hacked the anchor cable free from the foremast, and the ship rested nearly on an even keel, though her decks were washed by the waves. The men, with ropes tied around their waists, went to work at the task of cutting holes through the deck in order to get at the provisions. It was exhausting toil, and the only reward was about five gallons of vinegar and about twenty pounds of wet bread.

It was not deemed prudent to remain on the wreck any longer; sail was set, and the boats started on a northerly course. The captain hoped to gain a rainy latitude, where rain-water could be obtained to give life to this destitute band.

But the *Ann Alexander*'s crew was not destined to know the sufferings of the crew of the *Essex*, nor was it destined to brood very long over the possibilities of a dismal future. On the second day of the journey, a sail was sighted. Signals were made. They were answered. The men of the *Ann Alexander* soon climbed over the rail and were standing on the hospitable deck of the *Ship Nantucket* of Nantucket, Richard C. Gibbs, master.

The *Nantucket* sailed for Payta. She passed by the derelict that was once the proud *Ann Alexander*. Captain Deblois wanted to see what he could procure from the wreck, but rough weather made any attempt to board it unreasonable. Payta was reached on the 15th of September, and there the company separated for good. Two of the officers of the *Ann Alexander* and several of her crew shipped almost immediately on other whaling vessels. Captain Deblois was entertained for some time by Captain Bathurst, an English gentleman, and later went to Panama on board the Schooner *Providence*, Captain Starbuck. Thence, after crossing the isthmus, he obtained passage home.

The whale that destroyed the *Ann Alexander* was afterwards captured by a New Bedford whaler, the *Ship Rebecca Simms*, Jernegan, master. The capture was made about five months after the disaster. Captain Jernegan found two harpoons in the whale marked

with the initials of the *Ann Alexander*, and he reported that the whale's head showed signs of having been painfully injured and contained pieces of ship's timbers. The animal was diseased when the *Rebecca Simms* took him, and had lost all his former ferocity. He was a very large whale, and, even in his emaciated condition, yielded between seventy and eighty barrels. Had he still been healthy when the *Rebecca Simms* captured him, he would have made well over a hundred.

New Bedford did not learn of the *Ann Alexander* disaster until early in November, 1851. A steamer arriving at New York from Chagres, Colombia, brought the news from the South. A reprint of a story in the *Panama Herald* appeared in the New Bedford press as the first account of the happening.

The *Whalemen's Shipping List*, a New Bedford weekly publication, carried the *Panama Herald* item in its November 4th issue. A week later it carried another *Ann Alexander* story, which, to one reading it at this late date, is quite a comical one and is worth re-printing here. "A later instance of the power of the whale", says the item, "is found in an attack made by the animal upon the Bark *Parker Cook* of Provincetown on the 22nd of July, 1850, in the Atlantic Ocean. In this case a large sperm whale, after having 'eaten up' two boats, made for the vessel, striking her in the bows, and knocking the cutwater aside, but without doing further damage. The ferocious monster was then attacked from the bark with the Patent Whaling Gun and Bomb Lance, and after receiving three lances was dispatched. In the case of the *Ann Alexander*, if Capt. Deblois had used the Bomb Lance it would no doubt have prevented the loss of his ship. We have heard this opinion expressed by several experienced ship-masters. Most of the ships fitted this year, are supplied with this apparatus. Several whaling guns have been invented, including Brown's, Greener's and Allen's, all of which are considered very good articles. Allen's lance, however, is admitted to be an improvement over all other machines for the destruction of the whale, and its utility has been demonstrated by several experiments made here. They are for sale in this city by Edward R. Haskell, Agent of the patentees."

The item just quoted does not appear as an advertisement, but as a straight news story. It shows that editors in those days were more susceptible to the urgings of publicity men than they are at present, and it shows, too, how quick Edward R. Haskell was to see in a great ship disaster a wonderful opportunity for booming his own

business. We who have considered big-stunt advertisers and sensational publicity men as the glorious products of the twentieth century must now change our opinion. Mr. Haskell indeed was up early in the morning and on the job while the news of the *Ann Alexander* was still hot.

But while the owners of the *Ann Alexander* were mourning their loss and the relatives of her crew were rejoicing over the rescue of the men and Mr. Haskell was preparing a follow-up for his advertising campaign, newpapers and individuals away from the New England seacoast were laughing at the whole story. *London Punch* of December 6, 1851 contained a humorous account of the tragedy, the details of which were held up to ridicule.

Closer at home, however, was a long article appearing in the *Daily Gazette* of Utica, N. Y. That newspaper had received a copy of the *Panama Herald* which contained the story of the *Ann Alexander*, and the editor treated the affair lightly. In his article, he mentions "some indigestible facts that lead us to think the writer has taken in more than the whale could." He puts the story in the same class with other super-heroic tales of fiction, and compares Captain Deblois and his men to Sinbad and Jack the Giant Killer.

This Utica article arrived at New Bedford, and the editor of the *Whalemen's Shipping List* decided that it was his turn to indulge in laughter and sarcasm, and he wrote an answer which was published in his paper two weeks after the first account of the disaster. The Utica editor had jeered at the credulity of the sea-coast dwellers, and the New Bedford editor now jeered at the incredulity of the inlanders, and both had a good time out of it. Perhaps the gentleman of Utica lived to regret his outburst of jeering; perhaps he did follow the *Shipping List's* suggestion and slept with Bowditch's *Navigator* under his pillow to learn that the high seas were far different from the "raging canawls", as the New Bedford newspaper called them. But at any rate, the *Ann Alexander* incident, which so narrowly escaped the horrors that followed the loss of the *Essex*, finally closed, as far as newspapers were concerned, in a burst of humor.



## THE NARROW SQUEAK OF THE POCAHONTAS

*The story of a captain who, among other things, spent his twenty-ninth birthday in worry and, later, startled Rio by declining a drink.*





BY a curious whim of Fate, three ferocious attacks were made by whales upon whaleships within a year's space of time in exactly the middle of the last century. The story of the *Ann Alexander*, which foundered in August, 1851, has already been told. In 1850, the bark *Parker Cook* of Provincetown barely escaped a similar doom, and a few months later came the turn of the ship *Pocahontas* of Holmes's Hole.

The assailant of the *Parker Cook* was a large bull sperm whale. He showed his ugliness and his persistency from the beginning to the end of the conflict. He first was attacked by boats from the bark and was made a frenzied monster by the sting of the harpoon. He broached half out of water and capsized the boat which was fast to him. In the mix-up the line entangled itself around the boatsteerer's leg, almost cutting it off, and it was only due to great presence of mind on the part of the boatsteerer himself that his life was saved. He managed to secure his knife and cut the line. The upset crew was taken back to the vessel, and the chase abandoned for the moment. But the whale returned suddenly to the attack, and, rushing at the ship, struck her with great violence directly on the stem. The cut-water was buried right into the planking. The whale again rammed the vessel, but this time with diminished force. The captain lowered

a boat and engaged in a perilously close conflict with the animal. He shot three times with his bomb-lance before killing the whale, and each time the whale in return made a rush with open mouth at his antagonist. When finally cut in, the whale made one hundred and three barrels of oil, a sizable catch. The *Parker Cook*, received no really serious damage from the encounter, but was forced to put into Fayal for repairs and for medical service for the boatsteerer.

The attack on the *Pocahontas* happened on December 12, 1850, when the ship was cruising in the South Atlantic off the coast of southern Brazil. She was under the command of Joseph Dias, Jr., a man twenty-eight years old, and one of the youngest masters in the fleet. She was bound to the Pacific, and in the early part of December was in company with the *Ann Alexander*. Curiously enough, the *Pocahontas* was having poor luck, while the *Ann Alexander* was making a good catch of oil.

In the log-book of the *Pocahontas* is found the following entry under the date of December 7th: "Fine weather. At daylight saw sperm whales. At 7 A. M. lowered for them. At 10, one boat struck. The chocks came off, and the line ran down alongside the stem. So we had to cut. Another boat went on to the whale to strike him. Got on to his head and he rolled her over and the whale went off and we came on board minus 400 fathoms of line and two irons. At 2, lowered for more whales. At 5, the two boats struck one whale. Got the whale spouting blood and at 9 P. M. cut from him and he went off. Saw the *Ann Alexander* take a whale."

The following day the two ships must have parted company, for no more references to the *Ann Alexander* appear in the log-book until much later. But a reversal of fortune came to both ships. The *Ann Alexander* rounded the Horn only to be sunk by a whale the following August, while the *Pocahontas*, though rammed in the same manner as the other ship, was lucky enough to survive and to reach port in safety. How strangely destiny sported with these two vessels, which were together on the 7th of December, both bound hopefully to the Pacific!

The *Pocahontas* did not round the Horn till many weeks later. On the 12th of the month came the accident which put her temporarily out of commission. The log-book, written by Captain Dias himself, tells the story vividly:

"Thursday, Dec. 12th, 1850. Comes with a moderate breeze from the northward, and fine weather. At 5 A. M., saw sperm whales

and lowered two boats. At a little past six the larboard boat struck a very large whale. The whale sounded a little, came up, and appeared to be quiet and resigned to his fate, and Mr. B. was in the act of going up to lance him. When he got within a few fathoms of him, the whale milled for the boat and rolled jaw up. As quick as thought he bit her in two somewhere about the after-thwart, but that was nothing uncommon. But he was so intent upon his business that we could scarcely pick up the crew of the stove boat, two of which were hurt quite seriously.

"Finally we took them to the ship and dressed their wounds, which took an hour and a half. All this time the whale kept to work on the boat. It is quite useless for me to try to describe how fine he used her up, even breaking the oars, mast and everything that was large enough for him to get at. And another very uncommon thing was that more whales kept with him nearly all this time, while he never left the boat for one minute.

"Finally, after letting him chew the boat for nearly two hours, I concluded to let him take a bite at the ship. So we got everybody stationed ready to dart some kind of craft in him, but he managed to get out of the way, so did not hurt him, although we pricked him. But we stood along and came back on the other tack. The whale was heading a point to the leeward of the ship's stern and perfectly still, right alongside of some of the pieces of the stove boat. When I thought the ship would shoot alongside of him with the head yards a-back, it was done, and at the same time the whale milled and came right for the bow, to all appearances with all his might. The ship was going at the time certainly one and one half or two knots. The whale was certainly coming towards her three or four, when he struck her a little below light water mark, which broke the plank, three timbers and set the ship to leaking, but not very bad. But all that keeps the water out is the sheathing. Managed, by cutting away the lining, which was broke also, to stop the leak in a measure. Concluded that it would not be prudent to stop on the whaling ground and run the risk of having a gale of wind. Put away for Rio Janeiro, which is at least 750 miles from here."

The troubles of the *Pocahontas* were by no means over, even though she had escaped destruction. In her battered and leaky condition, she was due to find the passage to Rio doubly long. It was a nerve-racking passage for the young captain, burdened as he was with responsibilities that would make a far more experienced captain

extremely anxious. But Captain Dias was conscientious and capable enough to meet the trying situation. He had his moments of fear and anxiety, it is true, yet he never communicated his feelings except to the pages of his private log-book. The book reads as follows:

"Friday, December 13th. A brisk breeze from the S. E. Steering N. N. E. and N. E. by N. Ship leaking about 8 or 10 thousand strokes in 24 hours in good weather, but has increased none as yet. Saw several sails during the day.

"Saturday 14th. Brisk breezes from the S. E., with a little rain, Latter part, squally and rainy. Wind from the eastward.

"Sunday 15th. Brisk breezes from the eastward..... Leak about the same.

"Monday December 16th. A. M., strong breezes from E., Heading N. N. E. under topsails and courses.....

"Tuesday 17th. Moderate breezes from the southward. A. M. spoke a Braziling brig.... P. M., very moderate and calm. Bent a new fore topsail.

"Wednesday, 18th. A. M., very moderate and calm, and I don't know what to do with myself. Bound into port with a crippled ship in a calm, and the time flying so that I can hardly keep run of it. This certainly is very encouraging for a young skipper. I take a book and try to read, but I can't keep my mind on the subject more than a minute at a time. At 5 P. M., a light breeze sprang up from the eastward.....

"Friday, Dec. 20.... Well, this is getting along indeed. I don't know what to do with myself. Talk about trouble! I never knew what trouble was before, and I should like to know what I have done to deserve this heap. It takes away my appetite, and in fact kills me right out and out, and I believe if it holds calm much longer I shall lose what little reason I have got. Now is the time, I suppose, people want Christian fortitude to bear up under such afflictions, but I suppose I must bear it without the help of such things. P. M., wind dead ahead and hazy weather.

"Saturday 21st. A. M., brisk breezes from the N. E. and overcast weather. No observations. P. M., strong breezes. Took in topgallantsails and single-reefed the topsails. Ship heading E. by S. If this is not enough to make a man curse I don't know what is, but I suppose Christians would say it is all for the best, and I hope it may be so.

"Sunday, December 22nd. Comes with strong breezes from the N. E. and hazy weather. Ship standing on either tack under single-reefed topsails. Towards noon the wind moderated. Made sail accordingly. P. M., calm again.

"The steward very bad with the colic. What have I done to deserve this? It is either a calm or a head wind the whole time. I shall die myself if we don't get a fair wind soon. I am not in the habit of complaining generally, but this seems like a judgment put upon me, and if it is to try me, my patience is about exhausted. We have been eleven days coming 500 miles.

"Tuesday, Dec. 24th. . . . This longitude does not suit me, but I can't have any other, so I suppose I shall have to put up with it. Calm until 6 P. M., when a breeze sprang up from the S. W. Course by compass, N. N. E., and to the eastward. This is the first fair wind I have had for some time, and I think it is on account of my birthday, which comes at 12 o'clock tonight. Strong gales and thick rainy weather. At 12 o'clock tonight your humble servant will be 29 years old. Think of that!

"Wednesday 25th. . . . At 10 A. M., saw the land bearing N. W. Weather thick and rainy. Sounded in 47 fathoms. . . .

"Thursday 26th. A. M., baffling winds with squalls and abundance of rain and very thick most of the time, but notwithstanding, making the best of our way towards the entrance of the harbor. At M., calm. P. M., calm till 5 P. M., when a light breeze sprang up from the S. E., but it was too late to undertake to go in. . . .

"Friday, 27th. . . . At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 11 A. M., anchored in the outer harbor in 6 fathoms. P. M., went ashore and went through with the formalities generally attending such circumstances, that is, note a protest and get an order for a survey.

"Saturday 28th. A. M., held a survey. The men were two captains of merchant ships, Capt. Winsor of Kingston, Mass., and Capt. Prentis of Baltimore and the carpenter was Mr. Thomas, master carpenter of the U. S. Frigate *Congress*, now flag ship on this station. P. M., the sea breeze set in. Got under weigh and run in to the inner harbor, but found after anchoring that we were not in the right place, so tomorrow morning we shall have to move again. The survey pronounced the damage done by the whale but slight, but could make no estimate of the cost."

On the 31st, after a remarkably brief time for making negotiations, repair work was begun on the *Pocahontas* under the direction

of the master carpenter of the United States Frigate. The captain did not record in his log-book anything but the bare fact, but the incidents which led up to his success in getting the work started so quickly were told later in his home town on Martha's Vineyard.

A few days before the *Pocahontas* reached Rio, she had spoken a merchant bark, the *Banshee*. The captain of the latter vessel inquired the longitude, and Captain Dias, always a stickler for correct observations, answered promptly. Somehow or other the position named seemed wrong to the master of the *Banshee*, but Captain Dias's words were so precise and convincing that the merchant captain finally thought best to follow the information he had received.

Later, the two masters met in Rio at a dinner given by an agent of a New York firm to all the captains who had vessels in the harbor. The captain of the *Banshee* told of his meeting with the *Pocahontas* and of the information he had received. He added that if he had relied on his own reckoning, he would have gone on the rocks in the thick weather that prevailed, but that, following Captains Dias's convincing advice, he reached Rio in safety.

Captain Dias was the youngest of all the captains at the dinner, and hence, when he refused liquor at the host's invitation, his fellow guests were afraid lest his bold breach of etiquette might cause offense and do him injury. The host, in fact, was the man who had supervision over all repair work done in the harbor, and, if it had so pleased him, he could have delayed the work on the *Pocahontas* for an indefinite period. But the outcome of the dinner incident was just the reverse from what the acquaintances of Captain Dias anticipated. When the guests were leaving, the agent asked the "boy captain", as he was nicknamed, to remain. He complimented him on his stand regarding liquor. And he was so surprised and pleased over his first friendship with a sea captain who did not drink that he made arrangements for the repairs on the *Pocahontas* to have priority over all other repair work needed on the ships in the harbor. As a result, the *Pocahontas* put to sea on the 9th of January.

It is interesting to note that after the *Pocahontas* had rounded the Horn and was cruising around the Island of Masafuera, she again found herself in company with the *Ann Alexander*. On April 26, 1851, Captain Dias wrote in his log-book: "Masafuera. . . . At 8 A. M., spoke the *Ann Alexander*, Deblois, 400 bbls. on board . . Got 3 bbls. of potatoes. Paid \$3 pr. bbl.

"Sunday 27th . . . The old *Ann* in sight. . . At one, saw the A. A. a whaling. Kept off and run for her. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2 saw the whales, a very large shoal. Lowered 2 boats. At 5, one boat undertook to go on to them, but the whales perceived the boat. I think the other ship has been amongst them before. . . . .

"Thursday, May 1st, 1851. Masafuera . . . At 10 went ashore to see if I could get some wood and peaches, but found it was too late for peaches and rather a dear place for wood, but I don't know but I shall have to get some, for I think I had better pay a pretty good price for it here than to go where my crew have a chance to run away. At 4 P. M., went on board the *Ann Alexander* and stopped all night with my boat's crew."

What an interesting meeting this must have been! Captain Dias in the cabin with Captain Deblois; men from the *Pocahontas* in the forecastle of the *Ann Alexander*. Many stories were exchanged, no doubt, but the greatest story of all, the story that made eyes bulge with astonishment, was the account of the whale which attacked the *Pocahontas* off the coast of Brazil. Less than five months had passed since the event, and in less than four months to come the *Ann Alexander* was to meet with a similar accident and be sent to the bottom.

The two ships parted company the next day, never to come together again. But on July 26th, when the *Pocahontas* entered the harbor of Tumbez, Peru, she there met the *Nantucket*, the ship that was to rescue the crew of the *Ann Alexander* a few weeks later. The *Nantucket* left Tumbez for the Off Shore Grounds. The *Pocahontas* went there, too, but on the way stopped at the Galapagos Islands, and on the day that the *Ann Alexander* was rammed by the whale, Captain Dias was catching terrapin on Chatham Island.



## THE LOSS OF THE KATHLEEN

*Being the story of a vessel that could find no whales at all  
until she found one too many.*





THE whale that sent the *Kathleen* to the bottom displayed no ferocity, it did not purposely lunge at the vessel as did the whales which attacked the *Essex* and the *Ann Alexander*. Captain Thomas H. Jenkins of the *Kathleen*, a master who had seen ugly whales more than once in his career, reported that a gallied whale, frightened and confused, had been the cause of his ship's foundering. The animal had not been stung with a harpoon; apparently he had never seen whale-boats before, and, puzzled by the strange sight, was trying to escape. But even though the deliberate attack was missing in the *Kathleen*'s loss, yet this vessel is generally joined to the *Essex* and the *Ann Alexander* forming a trio of American whaleships rammed and sunk by whales.

The Bark *Kathleen* was built for the merchant service at Philadelphia in the forties. In her early voyages she sailed from New York. In 1851 she was purchased by James H. Slocum of New Bedford for use as a whaler, and as a whaler she remained for the rest of her existence. She was owned by J. and W. R. Wing of New Bedford when she made her last sailing, under Captain Jenkins, on October 22, 1901. She was nearly sixty years old, but still sound enough to encourage the belief that she would for many years continue to be for her owners what she had always been—a lucky vessel.

The beginning of the *Kathleen's* final voyage, like the end, was anything but lucky. She was hardly out of Buzzards Bay when she was hit by a terrific southwest storm. The bad weather continued with practically no abatement for twenty days, during which time the *Kathleen* was forced to run under little canvas. When better weather came, the *Kathleen* completed her passage to the Cape Verde Islands, where some Portuguese were shipped for the whaling season. The bark now carried thirty-eight men, a rather large complement for a New Bedford whaler, and in addition, she carried Mrs. Jenkins, the captain's wife, who was listed on the shipping articles as assistant navigator.

The *Kathleen* cruised about for a couple of months without any good opportunity of catching a whale. Prospects were dreary. But in the middle of March, 1902, she arrived on the 12-40 Ground, located about a thousand miles off the coast of Brazil, in about 12° north latitude and 40° west longitude. On her arrival at the 12-40, the *Kathleen* almost immediately saw a change of luck. The mast-head sighted a large sperm whale, and a long chase, lasting almost a whole day, provided an unusual experience for the men. It was an unsuccessful chase, however, as the boats did not get a chance to strike before a rain squall put an end to the hopes of catching the big fellow.

The ship cruised lazily about the next few days. Finally, on the 17th of March, a large school of sperm whales was sighted on the horizon. It was a magnificent, exhilarating sight for the men on the *Kathleen*. The weather was clear; the sea, comparatively calm; everything seemed perfectly in order for a lucky day. Captain Jenkins sailed his ship toward the whales, and, when he was within a mile of them, ordered four boats lowered. The chase was on.

By three o'clock, only two hours after the school had been first observed, the mate, J. W. Nichols, had killed a whale, waifed it, and was after another. The other three boats were all fast to whales. Captain Jenkins, who remained on the *Kathleen* to keep a general supervision over the hunt, had every reason to be jubilant. He went over to the dead whale to secure the carcass before proceeding to follow the boats. He wasted some little time doing so, as the ship's fore topmast had been damaged in a recent gale. He had hardly secured the whale's carcass when a man at the mast-head shouted down that the fast boats were out of sight. Captain Jenkins went aloft to take a look for himself. At the same time, Mate Nichols was

returning to the *Kathleen*; he could see no whales, and had decided to give up the chase, at least until the *Kathleen* could take him and his boat's crew to the place where the school had gone.

Captain Jenkins was in the main topmast crosstrees, scanning the horizon with his glasses, when he heard a whale spouting. He looked for the creature and saw him, a large one, about five hundred feet away, and swimming in the direction of the ship. Mr. Nichols was then alongside, ready to have his boat hoisted up. The captain shouted to the mate, telling him of the close presence of the whale and ordering him to take a try at the animal.

Nichols and his men immediately rowed out to the whale. With about a moment's effort they were upon him, head and head, and close enough to get fast. But something went wrong. The boatsteerer said afterwards that he was too close to make a good strike. However that might have been, Nichols's boat did not get fast. The whale, frightened and confused at the sight of his attackers, quickly made his escape. As Captain Jenkins reported the incident, the whale, instead of "going down or going to windward as they most always do, kept coming directly for the ship, only much faster than he was coming before he was darted at. When he got within thirty feet of the ship he saw or heard something and tried to go under the ship but he was so near and was coming so fast he did not have room enough to get clear of her."

The whale struck the *Kathleen* a terrific blow. In trying to return to the surface, he lifted her stern up two or three feet so that it made a great splash when it dropped back. But in spite of the shaking-up which the men on the ship received, none of them realized at first that the vessel might have been seriously damaged. There was no alarm or confusion. The whale soon appeared on the opposite side of the vessel, tossing about as though stunned and in pain. Mr. Nichols, seeing a good opportunity to get fast, had his boat rowed again in the direction of the animal.

Captain Jenkins, though he still was free from any apprehension in regard to the safety of his vessel, thought best to recall the mate from the pursuit. It was near nightfall; the other three boats were out of sight, and ought to be followed in the direction they were last seen. If Mr. Nichols should make fast to his whale, he might easily be drawn far away in the opposite direction. The mate made some objections first, for he did not wish to give up such a good chance to catch a big whale, but finally he came on board and had his

boat hoisted up to the davits. He was sent aloft by the captain to look for the missing boats and soon sighted them. The *Kathleen* sailed in their direction.

The discovery that the whale had dangerously damaged the *Kathleen* was made when one of the men happened to go down into the forecastle for a piece of clothing. He found the floor covered with water, and at once shouted the news to those on deck. Captain Jenkins was brought face to face with the threat of disaster; he realized that he might be forced to abandon the *Kathleen* almost any moment. He immediately ordered flags to be set at all the three mast-heads, hoping the boats that were out would obey this signal, which meant for everybody to return to the ship at once no matter what the circumstances.

The second mate at that time was about a mile and a half from the *Kathleen*. Captain Jenkins watched anxiously for his response to the emergency signal. The second mate, however, had nearly succeeded in killing his whale, and either acted on his own judgment in continuing the hunt or else failed to see the display of flags. The captain had plenty to do in making hasty preparations for abandoning the ship. He set two gangs to work, one to get bread, and the other, water.

Mrs. Jenkins was alone in the cabin reading, when her husband came to tell her that the *Kathleen* was to be abandoned. She collected some warm clothes, leaving all her other possessions, except her parrot. There was no time left for anything now; the *Kathleen* was sinking. All on board the vessel now crowded into the mate's boat and pulled away.

The boat was heavily loaded with its supply of water and bread and the twenty-one persons it contained. It was settled low in the water and the men had to bail constantly, as the water washed over the center-board. Those who were not bailing paddled the boat toward the second mate. The *Kathleen* rolled over on her beam's ends about five minutes after she had been abandoned.

In due course of time, the boat from the *Kathleen* reached the second mate, and was relieved of some of its occupants and of part of its supply of bread and water. The captain now went in search of the other two boats, and did not find them until nine o'clock. A final division of the bread and water and also of the men was now made; one boat had nine men assigned to it, while the other three had ten

apiece. And now all started on their journey towards the nearest land -- the Island of Barbados, more than a thousand miles away.

The men of the *Kathleen* were in an unfrequented part of the ocean. It was reasonable to suppose that they had a long and difficult journey ahead of them with very slim chances of being rescued. But luck was with most of them. A Glasgow steamer, the *Borderer*, happened to cross their path on the very next day. Captain Dalton of the *Borderer* had made the passage from the British Isles to Brazil many a time, and always had had difficulties with head currents. On the present trip, however, he was sailing three or four degrees to the eastward of his habitual course in order to escape the currents, and so, by this strange coincidence, came upon the boats of the *Kathleen*.

One boat, however, had not the good fortune of being picked up by the *Borderer* along with its other three mates. It had been separated widely from the others during the night. It was forced to make the whole journey to Barbados alone, a journey that lasted eleven days and that caused the men great suffering. Their water lasted only a short time, and, if they had not met some rainy weather, their suffering might have been far more acute and perhaps have ended with death.



## THE OMNIPOTENT JACK-KNIFE

*Being an account of the scrimshaw hours, when white men,  
so Melville says, played savages.*





A Yankee whaleman, while off the coast of Japan in 1843, thus wrote in his private diary: "I hope we will see sperm whales soon. If we don't, I don't know but what I shall go off the handle. 'Dull prospects all around us; large families behind,' as the song goes." Hunting for whales was at its best an uncertain, monotonous task. Often weeks and months would go by and none would be sighted. Leisure was comparatively plentiful, for the whaling master did not keep his men constantly employed in washing and scrubbing and climbing rigging as did the master of a swiftly-flying merchantman. So in "dry times," when whales were scarce, and when a long three or four year voyage seemed to drag hopelessly on, there were many victims of ennui. The diarist just quoted was simply suffering from a common ailment.

As a result of the whaleman's spare time, the art of scrimshaw came into being, an art which was peculiar to maritime America. As Mr. Clifford W. Ashley has said, the whaleman "developed the only important indigenous folk art, except that of the Indian, we have ever had in America." To escape from ennui, the whalemen taught themselves to make trinkets out of the teeth of sperm whales, out of the long jaw-bones and out of the whalebone from the mouths of right whales and bowheads. Carved ivories, canes, ornamented ditty-boxes, fancy busks, engraved teeth and dippers were only a few of the scrimshaw articles brought home proudly by the returning whalemen.

Proud indeed they might well have been, for a fine piece of scrimshaw represents infinite patience and care, and time without stint. Naturally there were but few whalers who had the specific talent necessary for artistry, and yet the scrimshaw seen today in museums and private homes is not without beauty and interest and admirable workmanship. Present-day land folk who have tried the art generally have failed; their leisure was limited.

The beginnings of this species of art are concealed in the past. Even the name "scrimshaw" is of doubtful origin. But it is safe to say that the art was born and developed on board whaleships. As early as 1826 it must have been practised considerably, for in the log-book of the Brig *By Chance* of Dartmouth there is the following entry under the date of May 20 of that year: "All these twenty-four hours small breezes & thick foggy weather. Made no sale. So ends this Day all hands employed Scrimshonting."

How long before 1826 whalers made their ivory and bone trinkets one cannot say. But Mr. Frank Wood, who dates the birth of scrimshaw at the time the whalers first entered the Pacific, says: "In 1795 the Ship *Beaver*, Captain Paul Worth, of Nantucket, was the first American whaler to go into the Pacific. She was followed in the same year by the Ship *Rebecca* of New Bedford. At about this date, when whaleships first began to make long voyages of three and four years' duration, scrimshawing probably came into existence." The whalers must have learned something, or at least have received inspiration, from the meticulous handiwork done by the natives of the South Sea Islands.

Herman Melville sailed on his whaling voyage in 1841, and from what he writes of scrimshaw in his "Moby Dick" it is seen that the art was then well established and widespread. "Throughout the Pacific," writes Melville, "and also in Nantucket, and New Bedford, and Sag Harbor, you will come across lively sketches of whales and whaling scenes graven by the fishermen themselves on sperm whale teeth, or ladies' busks wrought out of the right whale-bone, or other like scrimshander articles, as the whalers call the numerous' little ingenious contrivances they elaborately carve out of the rough material in their hours of ocean leisure. Some of them have little boxes of dental-looking implements, especially intended for the scrimshandering business. But in general they toil with their jack-knives alone; and with that almost omnipotent tool of

the sailor they will turn you out anything you please in the way of a mariner's fancy.

"Long exile from Christendom and civilization inevitably restores a man to that condition in which God placed him, i. e., what is called savagery. Your true whale-hunter is as much a savage as an Iroquois. I myself am a savage, owing no allegiance but to the King of the Cannibals; and ready at any moment to rebel against him.

"Now, one of the most peculiar characteristics of the savage in his domestic hours is his wonderful patience of industry. An ancient Hawaiian war-club or spear-handle, in its full multiplicity and elaboration of carving, is as great a trophy of human perseverance as a Latin lexicon. For, with but a bit of broken sea-shell or a shark's tooth, that miraculous intricacy of wooden network has been achieved; and it has cost steady years of steady application.

"As with the Hawaiian savage, so with the white sailor-savage. With the same marvelous patience and with the same single shark's tooth, or his one poor jack-knife, he will carve you a bit of bone sculpture, not quite as workmanlike, but as close packed in its maziness of design, as the Greek savage, Achilles's shield; and full of barbaric spirit and suggestiveness, as the prints of that fine old Dutch savage, Albert Durer."

Melville's praise of the whaleman as a "scrimshander" artist is none too great. The whalemen loves his handicraft. It became a part of his life, an indispensable part. The trinkets received their share of the sentiment and loving memories by which every true son of the ocean lives. Half of the pictures engraved on sperm whale teeth are sentimental in kind, the other half being whaling scenes and ships. Occasionally one finds a bit of poetry on a scrimshawed article. On a lady's busk, made from bone, is etched:

"This bone once in a sperm whale's jaw did rest;  
Now 'tis intended for a woman's breast.  
This, my love, I do intend  
For you to wear and not to lend."

The maker of this busk is representative of the whole class of whalemen, in that he was earnestly thinking of home in the hours set aside for his favorite recreation. It is due to this longing that there are so many jagging-wheels in every scrimshaw collection. A jagging-wheel is a small implement composed of a handle and

a wheel. The wheel has crimped edges, and its use is in crimping the edges of pies and in cutting out cookies. Often a jagging-wheel would have a fork attached to it. Wives, sweethearts, and mothers always expected a jagging-wheel when some beloved one returned from sea. Work boxes, too, and dippers made from cocoanut-shells with handles inlaid with ivory or tortoise-shell or mother-of-pearl would be additional souvenirs. Many a cane was made on board a whaler, its stock out of jaw-bone or else out of some native wood of a distant country, and its handle elaborately carved out of a whale's tooth. A boatsteerer in 1844 on the Ship Clifford Wayne of Fairhaven writes in his diary: "Nothing to do but make canes to support our dignity with when we are home."

One thing may be noted, and that is the word "scrimshaw," which Melville writes "skrimshander." The word must have passed through some curious development. It was "scrimshonting" in early days. In a log-book of 1837 we find "schrimson;" in one of 1843, "scrinshorn;" in one of 1861, "squimshon." Of course, some of these variations are due to the writer's poor way of spelling, but even so, there must have been actual variations in sound, since in a log-book of 1881 there is the word "schrimshorn," and in one of the 1870's we find the modern word, "scrimshaw," spelled correctly.

Just as the spelling of the word has had its variations, so has there been much difference of opinion in the scope of its meaning. It is often considered that scrimshaw work connotes engraving, and that it must include only the kind of engraving done on ivory or bone, and into which pigments are rubbed to bring out the design. But in its popular use, at least, scrimshaw includes far more. Jagging-wheels of ivory must necessarily be included, and so must canes. Possibly some might think that anything of beauty and skill made on ship-board ought to be included, but under such a sweeping definition we should have ship-models, on the one hand, and jagging-wheels made out of wood, on the other.

Now, since the art of scrimshaw received its birth on Yankee whaleships, it seems only proper to include in its definition just such articles as were made, wholly or in part, of portions of a whale—teeth, bone and whalebone. If one or more of these substances are used in the making of a trinket, then the trinket is a bit of scrimshaw. If a ship-model has its davits and blocks made out of sperm ivory, however, the proportion of the whole that the whale contributed would be too small for the work to be called

scrimshaw. But a jagging-wheel of ivory, a cocoanut dipper with an ivory handle, a picture engraved on a piece of jawbone, a bone bird-cage or pepper-pot, a sled of bone, and even the false leg that was made out of bone for Captain Ahab in Melville's story—all these and more are scrimshaw.

The practice of scrimshaw was so prevalent that it became an unwritten law of the whaling world that the lower jaw of the sperm whale with its teeth should always belong to the crew to use as it pleased. It was a prerogative which no one, in the golden days of the industry, ever dreamed of questioning. The teeth, though of excellent ivory, were not commercialized. So it was that when the Schooner John R. Manta returned to New Bedford from one of its last whaling voyages, only to get into trouble with customs officials because the sperm teeth on board were not set down in the manifest, a cry of astonishment went up from the old whalers of the seaport city. Customs officials prying into the matter of whale's teeth! A thing unheard of! And it required quite a bit of red tape before the matter could be straightened out and the prerogative recognized.

The process of cutting-in a sperm whale, when it had been captured and was lying alongside the ship, required that the lower jaw be the first part of the animal to be hoisted on deck. It was then immediately pushed to one side and the process of cutting-in and trying-out the blubber was carried through. Not till the oil was stored below and the decks washed did the crew turn their attention to the lower jaw. Then the teeth were removed with the aid of cutting spades and a small tackle, and later the flesh was scraped clean from the jawbone. Sometimes the teeth were put into brine to prepare them for use. The teeth are soft and can easily be worked when they are new; as they age, they grow harder. But even when old, the whalers had a trick of dipping them into hot water to make the surface more tractable to their crude tools.

Sperm teeth, in their natural state, are not smooth, but ribbed. They must be filed smooth by the scrimshaw artist. This in itself is no slight task. Files of varying degrees of fineness had to be used, and then the polishing had to be done with ashes from the try-works and finally with the palm of the hand. Sand-paper might have been used in the process, if such a luxury were available. We find this curious passage in the log-book of the Bark Napoleon

of New Bedford in 1865: "Caught a shark and skinned him; used the skin for sandpaper."

The tools used by whalers in scrimshaw work were of the simplest kind. The jack-knife was the all-faithful tool—whalers were almost uncanny in the workmanship they could turn out with the jack-knife alone. Then there were files, and chisel-like scrapers for those who wanted something a little better than a jack-knife. Crude hack-saws were used, too, and generally they were made by the whalers themselves. A thin strip of iron, heated in the stove and carefully filed, would be the blade of the hack-saw.

Thus, with the patience that hardly knows its equal on land, did the whalers create their works of art so interesting to later generations. Interesting, in that we marvel at the love and the time those rough-handed men devoted to their work. Yet it was this devotion that saved them from threatening ennui, that made them forget their lonesomeness. What a void there must have been in the life of a whaler who did not make scrimshaw! Grouchy and ill-humored we must imagine him, a detriment to whatever good-feeling there might be on his ship. Perhaps there were such unconventional persons; perhaps such a person was the writer of a journal on board the Bark Palmetto of New Bedford, who noted in 1881: "Nothing in sight and no signs of ever beeing any sperm whales around here the old man and the mate devote their time a Schrimshorning that is all they think of."

There is not much scrimshaw on the market now, and collectors and museums prize their scrimshaw very highly. The decline of whaling has made it a lost art. Possibly the largest display of scrimshaw anywhere is now in the museum of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society at New Bedford, and is made up of collections originally belonging to individuals. Frank Wood's collections of jagging wheels is at that museum, as well as the miscellaneous scrimshaw collections of Nathan Hathaway and Andrew Snow, Jr.

## SHOOTING THE SUN

*Being an account that tells of a Nantucket garden and, more especially, of the manner in which the old whalemen followed the ways and by-ways of the sea.*





WO often-told yarns are brought to mind when we think of the art of navigation as practised by the Yankee whalers of a hundred years back. One of these yarns concerns a Nantucket captain who, many a time, had made the round of the Cape de Verdes, the Brazil banks and the west coast of Africa. He knew every square foot of the Atlantic along his regular courses, and, without sextant or chronometer, managed to find his way. A glance at the sky and water, a sniff of the air, a taste of the particles of the sea bottom which would cling to his sounding lead—these were his navigating principles, but, chief among them, was the taste of the sea bottom.

On one of his voyages he took with him a box filled with earth, in which he had green stuff growing. In taking a cast of the lead one day, some wag in the crew, sceptical of the captain's uncanny power of taste, thought to play a trick upon him and smeared some soil from the flower box on the arming of the lead. A few seconds later the captain touched his tongue to the lead. His eyes opened

wide with stupefaction, and he shouted in the words of the now famous doggerel, "Nantucket's sunk, and here we are, right over old Marm Hackett's garden."

The other yarn, no less facetious than the first, might well be told of this same Nantucket captain. At least, the captain of this second yarn was a similar type in regard to navigation, but he had a glowing reputation as a successful capturer of whales. He had a son who rose through the ranks and became master of a whale ship at an early age. But this son was of the new school, and went to sea armed with every navigating device known to science, figuring his positions with irreproachable skill. As was natural, the son took every opportunity to cast reflection upon his father's slipshod ways. So it happened that, when the two captains met in the mid-Atlantic, the younger shouted, "What do you make out the latitude to be?" The elder replied with a chuckle, "My latitude is 'whales'; my longitude is 'more whales', and my course, if you want to know it, is homeward with a full ship." And the son failed to answer, for his vessel, after six months' cruising, had only a few barrels of oil below decks.

These anecdotes, of course, do not pretend to be more than stock yarns of the whaling ports, yet they contain the germs of truth. Yankee whaling masters rose to command, not by their understanding of nautical mathematics, but by their ability to command men and to find oil. At least one case is on record of a vessel which was navigated by the captain's wife, she being the only person on board familiar with the science. And frequently does an old log book turn up with its back pages filled with crude calculations. The problems begun and left uncompleted, the problems inked out, the erasures—how many hours of mental contortions and despair they represent! Copies of Bowditch are preserved that are so thumbed and begrimed as to be partly illegible. Often we find the log book writer complaining, "My observations never come right." Many a successful captain would prefer the dangers of lancing a whale to the long, disheartening struggle with a sextant. What pleasure was there, in such a case, or what use, even, in "shooting the sun" by day and trying a lunar at night, or for variety's sake observing Arcturus or Sirius or one of the planets? No wonder that observations were not faithfully kept day by day, especially when the vessel was sailing in poorly charted waters.

A strange confession is preserved for posterity in one of the old log books. It is the confession of a captain who took his observations

whenever the weather permitted. When his vessel was in the mid-Pacific making a passage to the northward, a curious phenomenon occurred in his observations which he could not understand. He reached the Equator and then the results of his calculations showed that he was sailing south. And yet every night the stars clearly denoted that the vessel was headed in the opposite direction. A few days passed; each "shooting" of the sun proved that a reasonable distance had been gained in the previous 24 hours, but always it was a gain in south latitude. Each day the captain confessed his bewilderment in his journal until, after many long hours of wrestling with figures, he discovered the little error which had made the calculations belie the heavens—such as the matter of a wrong sign before the observed latitude.

Of course there were a great number of whaling captains who knew the science of navigation as perfectly as any graduate of Annapolis. But even in the experience of such masters fell incidents which often must have made them skeptical of the advantages derived from practising the art. Charts were discouragingly inaccurate and incomplete in the first half of the last century. In fact, it was partly through the influence of the far-flung whaling voyages that exploring expeditions, such as the famous one of Wilkes, were sent out. Alexander Starbuck, in his whaling history, says in this connection: "In December, 1858, Professor Agassiz, in a letter to the American Geographical Society, encouraged the Polar expedition then agitated in the following words: 'I beg to add a word with regard to Dr. Hayes' expedition,—I consider it as highly important, not only in a scientific point of view, but particularly so for the interests of the whale fisheries'."

In view of the shortcomings of the early charts, against which the whalers had to be continuously alert, it is only natural to suppose that they were frequently surprised with the apparition of islands hitherto unknown to white men. Events of this nature are common in the log books of the period. The following is from the log book of the ship *Independence*, and was written in April, 1827:

"The lay of the island is 1°-10' South, and the longitude, by a good observation, is 174°-03' East. This island, not being down in the charts or books, we suppose it to be a new discovery. A reef runs all around the island at the distance of about three miles from the shore. By the appearance of the water, it is shoal. The island is about 25 miles long, very low, and covered with trees, mostly cocoa-

nut trees. Some of their canoes are very long, carrying large sail. The natives go entirely naked. They are rather larger than the common size." Thus is recorded what was probably the first visit of the white man to one of the Gilbert Islands.

In August of the same year it was written in the log book of the *Independence*: "At 9 P.M. saw a light ahead. Soon after, saw two more. At ten, tacked to the S. S. W. At one A.M., tacked again to the E. N. E. At daylight, saw it to be a small low island six miles long, distant twelve miles. Went within seven miles of it. Two canoes came off with a few cocoanuts. Having one native on board whom we brought from Rarotonga as an interpreter, who formerly belonged to one of the islands about here and who can understand the language, we learned that they had never seen a ship before. The island is not laid down on the books or charts, so we call it a new discovery. Lat.  $7^{\circ}25'$  South; Long.  $178^{\circ}47'$  East."

A large number of similar cases could be cited, but we shall limit ourselves to a few. The following extracts were written on board the ship *Champion*, of New Bedford, in 1848, while the vessel was in the Japan Sea.

"Saturday the 26th of May. . . . Heading to the S. S. W. Nearest land bearing E. S. E., 25 miles distant. Cape Nankaba bearing S. by E., 40 miles distant. Rocks, S. and W., not on the chart, 25 miles. . . .

"Monday the 29th of May. . . . Steering for Sado Island, not to be found as marked on the charts."

Again, in the log book of the same ship, we find a passage in which there is a touch, either of humor or disgust: "Sunday, April 9th. . . . We passed directly over Massachusetts Island as marked on the chart, which does not exist thereabouts. Lat.  $22^{\circ}34'$  North; Long.  $176^{\circ}45'$  East."

On flyleaves of log books and journals, too, we find records of errors and omissions on charts, such as this one, written by the captain of the ship *Good Return* in the 40's: "A dangerous reef was discovered by Captain Taber commanding the Ship *Maria Theresa*, on the 16th of November, 1843. Lat.  $37^{\circ}00'$  South; Long.  $151^{\circ}13'$  West. Capt. Taber does not find it laid down on any charts that he has fallen in with since the discovery. (Signed) John Swift, Jr."

Between the lines of such a memorandum, we can see the two captains, Taber and Swift, comparing notes somewhere on the high

seas, advising each other as to the unexpected dangers they had met and were liable to meet in their searchings after whales. And we can see, too, Captain Swift reporting the news to his friends at home, as a warning to captains outward bound, and it must be borne in mind that the memorandum quoted is but one of hundreds of such items of geography which were passed along from ship to ship, and from captain to captain. Indeed, charts were of little value to the master who did not know how to discount them and to check up on them with advices from his brothers in the business who had searched distant waters before him.

The *Friend*, a publication of Honolulu, contained in the 40's many items like the following:

"Fanning's Island. The harbor of Fanning's Island lies in Lat.  $3^{\circ}49'$  North and Long.  $159^{\circ}20'$  West. Approach the island from the east, and sail around the south side. There is no such island in this vicinity as is laid down on the charts as American Island.

"Christmas Island. The harbor which is under the lee of the N. W. point of the island is in Lat.  $1^{\circ}58'$  North; Long.  $157^{\circ}30'$  West. The east point of the island lies about 45 to 50 miles eastward of the anchorage, and vessels in approaching cannot be too careful of the point, as it is here that nearly all the wrecks occur. The island is not more than seven or eight feet in height and cannot be seen more than seven or eight miles off."

Nearly every captain, in the days of incomplete charts, would bring home information of this nature, and, along with the written memoranda, they would often draw little charts of their own. Frequently, too, they would make sketches of islands and harbors, as observed from a certain point of the compass and at a certain distance. Sailing directions for entering harbors, learned from natives or from bold experimenting, would also be added.

In a journal kept on the schooner *Emeline*, we find the following interesting passage under the date of December 7, 1843: "At half past six made Seal or Penguin Island, bearing S. E. by compass about eight miles distant. About eight made Pig Island bearing N. N. E. by compass, distant seven miles. Longitude by chronometer,  $51^{\circ}04'$  East. The longitude of Seal or Penguin Island is  $50^{\circ}14'$  East. The longitude of Pig Island is  $50^{\circ}00'$  East, making

our chronometer about 51 miles to the eastward of all her corrections, a pretty instrument truly to run by around the Crozettes, almost eternally enveloped in a dense fog. At half past eight Penguin Island bears due South by compass, and Pig Island N. by E. Strong breezes and tremendous snow squalls from W. N. W. At half past ten was astounded by the cry of 'Breakers close on board, a little on the lee bow.' They appeared to be either one or two sunken rocks or a small reef, over which the sea was breaking. Took in mainsail and put her about immediately having had a very narrow escape, the sea running very high. We would have been on them in five minutes, had they not been fortunately discovered at the instant. Pig Island bears from this reef N. by W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  W., about five miles distant. This is a most dangerous spot, as it is so far from the main, and nearly midway between the islands, and when the sea runs high it is almost impossible to discover them until you are right upon them."

The narrow escape of the *Emeline* shows vividly one kind of danger that whaling vessels were constantly running in the daily routine of their business. For the whaler had no hard-set course to travel. The energetic trout fisherman wades up streams that he knows nothing about but hopes to learn a great deal of. The bird hunter, if he be a true sportsman, likes nothing better than to tramp through woods and across moors new to him. And so with the whaleman, who tried to get the jump on his rivals by daring voyages to little-known waters. The frequent inaccuracy of his instruments, as suggested by the quotation from the *Emeline*'s journal, simply added to the confusion caused by poor charts, and it is to be wondered that more ships than we have record of did not founder on such reefs as the one on which the *Emeline* so nearly met her doom.

As may well be imagined, these little bits of information continually being gathered by whalemen would have formed an impressive mass of data if collected and compiled. The many chart corrections and locations of new islands would have been invaluable to any comprehensive work on the ocean. And, indeed, to some extent, such an outcome was realized. It happened that the peak of the whaling industry was in the 1840's, and it was during that decade that Matthew F. Maury was developing his important work on *Winds and Currents*. The famous hydrographer fully appreciated the assistance that the whalemen were particularly fitted to render him, and he was earnest

and thorough in taking advantage of it. When one remembers that in 1846, more than 700 whaling vessels were registered in United States ports, one can understand that Lieutenant Maury would have been unwise indeed not to have availed himself of their aid.

Hence, in the name and pay of the government, men associated with Lieutenant Maury's office visited the whaling ports, where they interviewed captains and ship-owners. Copyists in his charge made résumés of log books. And when these sources were bringing him in wealth of material, he conceived the idea of returning the favor and, at the same time, of doing a great service to the whaling industry. He had meditated, perhaps, over the method (sometimes, apparently, a lack of method) which the sea hunters used in finding their whaling grounds. He thought to make the voyages of whaling dependent on an elaborate systems by which whaling captains would be sure to find whales with a minimum of energy, and danger and wasted time. In short, he was going to be the efficiency expert of an industry which had flourished in New England since Pilgrim days and which was just then in full bloom.

Lieutenant Maury's mass of information from authentic sources led him to believe that he had discovered the secrets of whaling grounds, and that he could make broad generalizations. He had charts made, in his Wind and Current series, graphically showing how many whales could be found in different places at different seasons of the year.

On one of these world charts, published in 1851, the oceans are sprinkled with little figures of whales; the bodies of the sperm whales are white, those of the bone whales, black. Each square of the ocean surface marked by the meridians and parallels is considered as a unit. If a square contains several white whale-bodies, then, according to Lieutenant Maury's data, sperm whales are abundant during the seasons noted in the square. If a square is filled with black bodies, the same is true in regard to the bone whales.

On another chart published by the government under Lieutenant Maury's direction, the squares on the ocean surface are each treated as a separate chart, each having verticals to denote the twelve months of the year, and horizontals to designate numbers of days up to 300. In each of these squares curves are plotted, one curve standing for the number of days during which, according to the records found, whales were hunted during each of the various months. Another curve stands for the number of days on record during which sperm

whales were observed, and a third curve for the days during which bone whales were seen.

Thus an elaborate system was given, which the famous hydrographer hoped would stimulate and bring economy of time to the American whaling industry, through the government's bounty. A captain, upon leaving his home-port, would merely have to examine the chart; he would decide upon some whaling ground that should be prolific when he could conveniently arrive to fill his ship, and all delay, all doubt, all "trust-to-luck" wandering would disappear from the enterprise. And this recommendation for the Maury charts sounded reasonable to all who were not initiated into the art of whaling. Unfortunately, however, the dreams of the man of science did not coincide with the practical needs of the man of the sea.

The whaling captain was not of the type to which the Maury charts, or any other scientific or systematic or "practical" device would appeal. He had plenty of ways, in his estimation, to find good whaling grounds. Experience alone was nearly sufficient for his needs. And then he would compare notes with other captains and keep his ears open while on shore between voyages. Then, too, he had recourse to the "gam," that congenial institution which was one of the few treats in a whaleman's life. A gam was a meeting between two vessels on the high seas. Merchant ships had no time to stop when passing—it was "only a signal shown" with them. But two whale ships, coming across each other, would approach, lay aback, and exchange visits. On such occasions there was good fellowship aplenty on deck, but the two captains would sit by the cabin table, freely exchanging news about the prevalence of whales in the neighboring seas, if they were not jealously inclined, or trying to worm information out of each other, if they were.

Thus from experience and habit, the whaling captains knew about whaling grounds in general, and from the talk that always passed from one ship to another in the fleet and also from their own personal explorings, they found more particular information about their quarry. There were times in the history of whaling when the discovery of a new whaling ground would draw a large part of the fleet thither to create havoc among the schools of whales which at first seemed inexhaustible. At one time the waters around the Galapagos Islands, which lie on the Equator ten degrees west of Ecuador, were popular. "This is the greatest place for sperm whales in the world," wrote one

whaleman of 1853 in his journal, "and there is more oil taken around the Galapagos than all the rest of the world. There are sometimes 25 sails in one glance here, all looking for whales."

The so-called Off-Shore Grounds, some twenty degrees west of the Galapagos, were, after their discovery in 1818, as madly sought by whalers as were the California gold fields by the Forty-niners. The waters off the coast of Japan at one time were exceedingly popular. The Kodiak Grounds, off the northwestern shore of America, were opened in 1835; some years later, the coast of Kamschatka was a favorite resort; in 1848 an abundance of whales was found in Behring Strait, and during the three years immediately following this discovery, 250 ships found their cargoes in these icy haunts. During the last part of the nineteenth century, the balance of whale hunting shifted to the colder parts of the ocean, for then a cargo of whalebone was more desirable than a cargo of oil, and the high latitudes were the places where the bone whales abounded. There were about 40 whaling vessels in the Arctic at the time of the great disaster of 1871, and a fleet of forty vessels was a large group indeed during those declining years of the industry.

These changes in the important whaling grounds were not the results of passing fancies on the part of the whalemen. Certain grounds might be highly profitable for a few years running, and then they would cease to yield an abundant supply of oil, sometimes because the whales, for some unknown reason, had migrated elsewhere, sometimes because the slaughter had nearly wiped out the whales. The discovery of a new ground would draw a great part of the fleet thither, and the presence of too many ships, eager for a share of the spoils, would invoke the old economic law of supply and demand. From these considerations, it will be seen that the charts of Lieutenant Maury did not solve the problems of whaling captains. The data on which they were based represented years of whale hunting, it is true, but they represented years in which new whaling grounds were being discovered, and old ones endangered by a surfeit of popularity. And the change was still going on, year by year.

Some of the important whaling grounds were discovered by accident, but generally they were found by captains who declined to follow the lead to the popular resorts, and who, making light of the risks they were sure to encounter, sailed onward to find new grounds from which they alone might secure the first fruits. Such men were explorers in the finest sense of the title, yet seldom does

one hear their deeds sufficiently extolled. They were equal in their enterprise and boldness to the Hudsons and Frobishers and Drakes of a more glittering era in history. They tried every gulf and sea that empties into the ocean; they feared neither warlike tribes nor hidden rocks. One New Bedford captain took his ship into the Mediterranean. His trip was not dangerous, of course, and it was made in vain, but it shows the attitude of the enterprising Yankee captains who took every chance and tried every means to outwit their rivals in the search for oil.

What the whalers did for exploration and discovery, they did quietly and modestly. Few and meager have been the tributes they have received for this service to the world, and yet the representatives of both State and Church did not precede, but followed them to many an unknown land. Many instances could be cited, but we shall mention only one which has a touch of the dramatic about it. It is quoted by Starbuck from an article on the whale fishery in 1834 in the *North American Review*:

"A few years since, two Russian discovery ships came in sight of a group of cold, inhospitable islands in the Antarctic Ocean. The commander imagined himself a discoverer, and doubtless was prepared with drawn sword and with the flag of his sovereign flying over his head to take possession in the name of the Czar. At this time he was becalmed in a dense fog. Judge of his surprise, when the fog cleared away, to see a little sealing sloop from Connecticut as quietly riding between his ships as if lying in the waters of Long Island Sound. He learned from the captain of the sloop that the islands were already well known, and that he had just returned from exploring the shores of a new land at the south; upon which the Russian gave vent to an expression too hard to be repeated, but sufficiently significant of his opinion of American enterprise. After the captain of the sloop, he named the discovery 'Palmer's Land,' in which the American acquiesced, and by this name it appears to be designated on all the recently-published Russian and English charts." Starbuck goes on to say that "a similar experience awaited the English ship *Caribou*, Captain Cubins, who came in sight of Hurd's Island, and, like the Russian, thought it hitherto unknown land. The similarity was carried still further by the appearance of the schooner *Oxford*, of Fairhaven, whose captain informed him that the island was discovered by them eighteen months before."

## A HUDSON BAY TRAGEDY

*An account of shipwreck and scurvy, into which the  
curiosity of a Royal Northwest policeman enters.*





ONE naturally supposes that the officers of the Royal Northwest Mounted are so busy "getting their man" that they have little time or inclination to indulge in the pastimes of the antiquarian. And one would hardly consider the bleak snowy spaces of northern Canada as productive of those relics of the past which stir the enthusiasm of the historian and the archaeologist.

Perhaps it is because of the limited interests of the mounted police and because of the few "finds" offered in those lonely wastes that the officer in charge of the Baker Lake post in the Hudson Bay region was greatly stirred when he, some time last summer, stumbled upon a board, discolored by age, but with its mysterious carved letters and names still legible.

The board was a little over three and a half feet long, twelve inches wide at the bottom, and tapering to a little over eight inches wide at the top. An enigmatical "Bk. A. G.," followed below by the word "crew," was carved across the top of the board, and ten names were inscribed, one underneath the other and each followed by a Roman numeral.

The board appeared to be of pine or spruce, cut in a mill, and, though weather-beaten, its lettering was sharp and distinct and cut by a man of no little skill. The names themselves gave no clew; French, Portuguese, Irish and English nationalities were represented in the list.

The discoverer of this mysterious relic sent his "find" to his chiefs in the Ottawa Government, and they, desirous of ferreting out the hidden story, began to write letters and ask questions.

Capt. George Comer of East Haddam, Conn. was consulted as an authority of Hudson Bay's history, for the greater part of his

active life was spent a-whaling in that cold region. And eventually the story of the board went to New Bedford, from which port a group of vessels was once wont to leave each year for the Hudson Bay whale fishery.

It was thus that the mystery was solved and the "Bk. A. G." was resolved into the bark *Ansel Gibbs*, one of the whaleships which belonged to Jonathan Bourne of New Bedford, and one of a pair which was wrecked in Hudson Bay 57 years ago.

And what of the names carved so carefully and followed by the little Roman numerals? A ghastly tale clings to them, for they were the names of men that died of scurvy, months after the shipwreck, and during the gloomy days when they were living on the inhospitable and frozen shores of Marble Island. The story of the *Ansel Gibbs* —what we know of it—has a dismal fascination.

Hudson Bay whaling in the seventies was a profitable undertaking. The passage was short, and at that time there were no heavy regulations placed by the Canadian Government on New England vessels visiting those inland reaches.

There was plenty of hard whaling to be done in Cumberland Inlet and the bay itself when the season was on, but during the winter months there was some relaxation. A vessel going to Hudson Bay would take a large supply of lumber with her, sufficient amount to roof over her decks when she went into winter quarters and perhaps enough besides to build a few huts on shore.

When the cold months arrived the vessel would be gradually frozen in tight; natives would settle nearby, and between the natives and the whalers there was constant intercourse.

When provisions were plentiful this winter life had many charms from the whaler's point of view. The natives would go out for seal and muskox; the white men lived in comparative idleness, though there was whalebone to be scraped and the oil to be cared for.

But a whaler who went on one Hudson Bay voyage generally longed to go on another, and in the days when it was difficult to fill a crew for a cruise to other whale grounds the agents had no trouble in finding enough men for Hudson Bay.

Marble Island, near the northwestern corner of Hudson Bay, was one of the favorite spots selected by the New England whalers for wintering. In the fall of 1872 two New Bedford vessels were hovering about the island, cruising here and there in search of whales before settling down indefinitely for the cold season.

These two whalers were the bark *Ansel Gibbs*, Thomas McPherson, master, and the bark *Orray Taft*, Capt. Parker. Both were owned in New Bedford, the former, as already mentioned, by Jonathan Bourne, and the latter by Andrew H. Potter.

On Sept. 14, the *Orray Taft* was wrecked on the island, and on Oct. 19 the *Ansel Gibbs* met the same fate. Here were two crews stranded, with no hope of rescue before the following summer, at the earliest, for not before that time was any vessel expected to be cruising in those parts for whales.

And neither was there any hope of a searching party being sent for them, for they would not be counted among the missing for a year, at any rate, so it was a gloomy outlook, and the winter which had been anticipated with pleasure was to turn into one of anxiety.

Natives, as usual, settled around the temporary homes of the white men, but they, too, suffered from an insufficiency of food. Fresh meat was scarce that year; the land animals and the sea beasts which the natives killed whenever possible, were never very reliable sources of food supply, and this year they happened to be more elusive than ever.

And, as a result of the unbalanced diet and the lack of fresh food, the white men fell prey to the dread scurvy. Fourteen died in all, ten from the *Ansel Gibbs*'s crew and four from the *Orray Taft*'s. Twelve of these deaths occurred in the months of February and March, one in April, and the last as late as July.

The board found by the policeman was the dark record of these deaths—not all of them, for the list of names included only the ten unfortunate members of the *Ansel Gibbs* crew.

These names were checked by means of a contemporary newspaper account of the tragedy, an account which contained not only the names of all the fourteen who died at Marble Island that year, but also the dates of their dying. The little Roman numerals on the board indicated the order of the deaths, and, as these numerals ranged from I to XIV, and yet were only ten in number, it will be surmised that the four missing numbers represented the dead of the *Orray Taft*. This is the correct surmise. Somewhere in that cold region there may be another board with the missing names and numerals, waiting for some other Canadian officer to find it.

It is a rare event when a person hunts for a log book of a certain voyage and actually finds it. But in the case of the *Ansel Gibbs* this happened. The Whaling Museum at New Bedford possesses the

log book of the fatal voyage, and, though it does not contain full particulars of the wreck, it does contain something even more remarkable.

The last entry concerning the voyage itself was written Oct. 18, the day before the wreck, and reads as follows.

"This day wind N. Employed getting ice. So ends these 24 hours."

That is all. The rest of the page is blank, significant of the stress of the following day. But, on the next page of the log book a different handwriting appears, and—well, let the writer tell his own story:

"July 14th, 1873. In looking around the beach today I was lucky enough to find the log book of the wrecked Bark *Ansel Gibbs* it having been under the ice since October 19th, 1872, and I shall continue to keep a strict account of every thing that happens from this date.

E. J. Reed."

The coincidence between the finding of the log book and the finding of the board 50-odd years later is striking. Reed's discovery, however, was not of extraordinary nature, for the log book might have been dropped in the scramble following the wreck and remained on the frozen shore of Marble Island.

But the officer of the Canadian Mounted who found the carved record of death had no way of knowing what it was all about, especially since his discovery was made at Baker Lake, some 200 miles from the island where the *Ansel Gibbs* men spent their tragic winter.

How the board found its way so far inland, up Chesterfield Inlet, is still a mystery and probably will be. Presumably natives were responsible for its journey, but why did they carry it there and why was it kept so well preserved?

But to continue with Reed's journal, which is the only written account of the life of the two shipwrecked crews on Marble Island:

"Tuesday, July 1—Began with cold, rainy weather. Wind north-east. There is only five of the *A. Gibbs* crew that are well now, eight having died with the scurvy and the remainder are sick with scurvy and other diseases. Those that are well are the captain, first officer, two boatsteerers and carpenter. We are all separated and living in tents or, I should say, in three separate tents. The second officer is sick on board of the wrecked bark *Orray Taft*. . . ."

Two days later mention is made of the schooner *Abbie Bradford*, which was to take part in the rescue of the marooned men:

"Thursday, July 3—Began with a strong breeze from the north. Cold and cloudy. Saw the schooner *A. B.* off the northeast end of the Island. One boat arrived from Seahorse Islands after being absent one week. . . .

"July 4—Went on board the wreck. Saw considerable bone on the bottom close to the ship. Fished up two pieces. It is in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms of water at ebb tide. . . .

"July 5—Repaired my boat and went on board of the wreck and got 10 pieces of bone. . . .

"July 6th. Went on the island and goat a goat left there by the schooner in Capt. McPherson's care. . . .

"July 7th Began working on the bone. Got three to help out of all the Gibbs' crew that are now on the island, except the captain and first officer. . . . Latter part rainy, and so we were obliged to stop fishing. Got about 15 hundredweight.

"July 8th. Began with strong breezes from northwest. Couldn't work on the bone. Middle part it moderated and we went to work. Managed to get about 500 pounds.

"July 9th. Began with a cold, blustering day. In the morning went to work fishing up bone. At 10 a. m. George Hadley died. He was a seaman on board of the *A. Gibbs*. Middle and latter parts were employed digging a grave and burying the dead.

"July 10th. Employed fishing up bone and getting casks ready to put oil in. None of the others are willing to help.

"July 11th. Employed getting oil around the shore. Succeeded in getting 10 casks and towed them to where our tent is. Didn't roll them up because it was about night. It is hard work, as there is only five of us to do it, and I find being wet so much makes a young man feel old. . . .

"July 12th. The harbor is full of ice . . . Employed storing oil and scraping bone.

"July 13—One of the *Orray Taft's* boats came from the mainland. The day ends with a heavy thunder storm, the first for the season.

"July 14—Employed scraping and washing bone . . .

"July 15—Employed washing bone . . .

"July 16—Employed washing bone . . .

"July 17—Saw some bone on the bottom and tried to get it, but the water was too deep. Only got about 300 pounds. Intend to try again.

"July 18—Employed getting oil and bone. Henry Smith, carpenter of the wrecked bark *A. Gibbs*, agreed to assist in getting the oil and bone together for shipment, but has been to work for other parties ever since, without giving any cause for not assisting his captain according to their agreement.

"July 19—Employed scraping and washing bone. Henry Smith still at work at the *Orray Taft*.

"July 21—The captain and myself began coopering oil. At 10 a. m. Andrew Lewis and Edward Quinn came and helped finish. Towed a cask of flour down to the tent. . . .

"July 22—Nothing unusual occurred on the island . . . Harry Smith at work on board of the *Orray Taft* yet.

"July 23—The Schooner *A. Bradford* came in and anchored, full and bound home. Employed bundling bone.

"July 24—Employed marking and weighing bone. Capt. Gifford of the *A. Bradford* refuses to allow three of the *A. Gibbs*' crew a passage home in his vessel. Their names are Mr. Williams, the second officer; Henry Smith, carpenter, and Richard Nickerson, seaman.

"July 25—Employed getting casks ready to put water in for the schooner.

"July 26—Got some casks and towed them to fill with water. Middle part it blew a gale and rained. Didn't get any water.

"July 28—Employed filling water. Middle part I covered the oil with turf.

"Aug. 1—Put 37 packages of bone containing 3535 pounds on board of the schooner *A. Bradford* for shipment.

"Aug. 2—Went on board the schooner *A. B.* and at 10 a. m. took the anchor and steered for home."

The *Abbie Bradford*, which was another whaler in the Hudson Bay fleet of Jonathan Bourne, arrived in New Bedford on the 7th of September, 1873. Her arrival brought to their home port the first news of the loss of the two ships. On board of her were the survivors of the crews, all except the three that were mentioned in Reed's notes.

Why these men were left on Marble Island by the *Abbie Bradford* one doesn't know, but, lest this refusal of rescue be considered extravagantly harsh or demoniacal, it should be pointed out that other whalers were expected to touch at Marble Island about the time the *Abbie Bradford* left for home.

As a matter of fact, the three men had only two weeks to wait, for on the 16th of August they were picked up by the bark *Glacier*, owner by Andrew H. Potter of New Bedford, and arrived home Sept. 26.

A newspaper account of the day says that these shipwrecked men, "who, together with the crew of the *Glacier*, were attired in suits of skins, attracted public attention on their landing."

And this newspaper account concludes with the mention of another remarkable "find" in the cold regions, a "find" more remarkable than the log-book which E. J. Reed of the *Orray Taft* picked up, and more remarkable, perhaps, than the board which the Canadian officer came across at Baker Lake.

"At Repulse Bay," says the item, "the *Glacier* obtained from the natives . . . two large solid silver spoons, one large and one small silver fork, and a teaspoon, supposed to have belonged to the unfortunate Sir John Franklin."













